



**CANADIAN
CATTLEMEN'S
ASSOCIATION**

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The Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) appreciates the opportunity to answer questions related to House Committee on ENVI's undertaking of a freshwater study. The CCA represents Canada's 60,000 beef farm and ranch member producers. Secure access to high quality and quantity of freshwater is critical to agricultural producers and this is especially so for those raising livestock.

As part of its 2030 goal setting initiative the Canadian beef industry has collectively set ambitious goals on reducing the industry's GHG emissions intensity by 33 per cent by 2030. In addition, to safeguard the existing 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon stored on lands managed with beef cattle and sequester an additional 3.4 million tonnes of carbon every year.

Specifically to water, the industry commits to promoting practices that maximize water quality and retention, to deliver healthier landscapes, resilience to drought and flood events, and groundwater recharge as appropriate to the regions precipitation. Producers will improve water use efficiency in the beef value chain. And the industry will build public and policy-making understanding of the benefits provided by grassland ecosystems, of which beef cattle producers manage and care for over 44 million acres. These benefits include protection of wetlands; the role wetlands play as carbon sinks; filtration of nutrients thus protecting water quality and reducing non-point source pollution; building resilience to drought and flood events; and, supporting groundwater recharge and future water supplies.

Questions for stakeholders in preparation for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development's study on freshwater

1. Introductory information

a) Which issues related to protecting and managing freshwater does your organization work on?

- Fish habitat protection and enhancement matters as they relate to beef farms and ranches across Canada - *Fisheries Act*.
- Navigable waters matters as they pertain to private landowners and public land leaseholders - *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*.
- Access to water resources for use in an agricultural context on beef cattle farming and ranching operations across Canada - *Canada Water Act*.
- Matters related to freshwater and wildlife habitat protection/enhancement; environment and operating beef cattle/agricultural operations sustainably - *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*.
- Freshwater wetlands, creeks, rivers, reservoirs on beef cattle operations across Canada as related to migratory bird habitat protection and enhancement - *Migratory Birds Convention Act*.

2. Interaction and collaboration with federal departments and agencies

a) Does your organization interact with federal departments and/or agencies on freshwater issues? If so, on which issues and with which departments and/or agencies?

Yes, CCA does interact with federal departments including Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO); Transport Canada; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC); and, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) including the Canadian Wildlife Service on matters related to freshwater resources and beef cattle ranching and farming operations across Canada.

b) Do the specific freshwater issues targeted by your organization fit within the mandate of a given federal department and/or agency or do they relate to more than one department and/or agency? If more than one, have you been able to identify a lead department and/or agency with which to engage?

Freshwater issues the CCA addresses on behalf of its membership span more than a single federal department. We have been able to identify lead departments for our present issues communications.

c) Have you encountered notable successes in engaging with the federal government on freshwater issues? If so, please specify. If you have not had success in doing so, what in your opinion is the reason (e.g., no program available tailored to your needs, no identifiable service or unit within a department and/or agency with which to engage)?

Presently, it is not possible to identify notable successes in engagement with various federal departments because those engagements are on going, with some significantly delayed. One of the most significant is the development of regulations around the *Fisheries Act*, which is close to two years into implementation, and no regulation in effect. The other is the Minor Works Order under the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*, (Transport Canada), which stakeholders have been waiting on now for months.

d) Do you foresee engaging with the new Canada Water Agency? If so, in what way? What are your organization's expectations with respect to the Agency?

We do wish to engage with the Canada Water Agency on an advisory and consultative basis as it relates to water issues affecting, or potentially affecting, beef farms and ranches across Canada. Secure access to water resources is of paramount importance to the sustainability of farms and ranches and for the role these operations, and the beef industry as a whole, will play in the economic recovery post pandemic.

3. Federal water legislation, policies and regulations

a) Does your organization interact with federal departments and/or agencies on policies, legislation, regulations, or funding programs related to freshwater? If so, please specify.

Yes, the CCA interacts on policy, legislation and regulation with several departments in relation to freshwater in Canada. These include DFO, AAFC, Transport Canada, and ECCC. Our interactions are usually related to aquatic species at risk, terrestrial species at risk, migratory birds regulation, fisheries habitat, freshwater navigation, wetland and riparian habitat protection and enhancement, and security of access to freshwater resources for agricultural operations. Our provincial association members also deal with water policy and legislation at the provincial level.

b) Can you identify any current gaps in federal water legislation, policies, regulations, and/or initiatives, or in general across jurisdictions? If so, please specify.

It would be prudent to conduct a thorough and transparent analysis on the direct and indirect impacts of expanding agricultural water infrastructure and access could pose on the conversion of critically endangered

native grassland ecosystems to cropland. Also, a thorough analysis of existing legislation, policies and regulations as to the impact on the conversion rate of native grasslands to croplands.

c) Do you feel the federal government could play a more effective role in protecting watersheds in Canada? If so, which watersheds and how?

Working with provinces and territories the federal government can work to better understand the dynamics and potential harmful impacts on watershed and groundwater recharge. Identify and mitigate the risks to expansive watersheds like those along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and their recharge importance for identified groundwater aquifers often great distances away. Ensuring agricultural access to sustainable high quantity and quality of water for agricultural use is of utmost importance to resilience and recovery post pandemic.

d) Are there areas of freshwater policy, legislation and/or regulation where you feel the federal government should play a greater role?

Enact legislation, policy and regulation that enhances the quantity and quality, and assures to access, freshwater resources for agricultural producers while balancing the need to use yet protect the resource.

e) Are there areas of freshwater policy, legislation and/or regulation that you feel the federal government should vacate and leave to another level of government or to the private sector?

Ideally, work with provinces, municipalities and territorial governments acknowledging their water resource management jurisdiction to find solutions and enact symbiotic policy to meet the outcome needs.

f) Are you aware of instances where federal freshwater policy, legislation, regulations, and/or initiatives have clearly benefitted from your organization's input?

Fisheries Act amendments and regulatory consultation/engagement (on-going). Species At Risk Advisory Committee, including aquatic species at risk.

4. Collection of information and data

a) Do you believe that there is sufficient data collected and made available publicly about freshwater in Canada?

Needs to be more. Finite mapping and benchmarking of Canada's freshwater resources is needed. More finite data and understanding of the dynamics of surface freshwater and groundwater extractions and recharge.

b) Do you believe there should be improvement in freshwater-related data-sharing?

Yes.

c) Is there any specific type of data or information you would like the federal government to provide to freshwater stakeholders?

Detailed (high resolution) wetland inventory is of utmost importance. State of our freshwater resources in Canada study/report may be a good start.

d) Has your organization experienced challenges obtaining well-organized data from the federal government on issues relating to freshwater?

e) Is the lack of standardized data or information across government jurisdictions a problem or challenge for

your organization in accomplishing its objectives with respect to protecting and managing freshwater?

Those agricultural producers on working landscapes would benefit by having access to detailed robust freshwater/wetland mapping data to build upon sustainable land management practices.

5. International and business issues

a) Should Canada play a greater role internationally in helping find solutions, either through government and/or the private-sector involvement, to the challenge of global freshwater security?

b) Do you feel Canadian private-sector companies, including financial institutions, can and should play a role internationally?

c) What role can the federal government play in better supporting freshwater-related academic research, R&D, businesses, products, and services?

Consult with specific sectors and national member organizations on where the greatest need exists for federal government investment.

Briefs may be submitted at any time, but those received by 7 May 2021 may help inform the committee in its selection of witnesses to appear at committee meetings as part of this study.