



ALBERTA BEEF INDUSTRY GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

As of May 16, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Executive Summary: Alberta Beef Industry Priorities</i>	3
<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry</i>	4
Research and Extension	4
Risk Management	5
Agriculture Operation Practices Act	5
Forestry and Grazing	5
<i>Ministry of Environment And Parks</i>	6
Public Lands and Land Use Planning	6
Ecological Goods and Services	7
Wildlife Management and Damage Compensation on Private Lands	8
<i>Ministry of Labour and Immigration</i>	9
Access to Labour	9
Farm and Ranch Safety	9
Employment Standards	10
Right to collective action/Unions	11
<i>Associate Ministry for Red Tape Reduction</i>	12
<i>Ministry of Municipal Affairs</i>	13
Rural Infrastructure Investment	13
<i>Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, and Tourism</i>	14
<i>Ministry of Advanced Education</i>	14
<i>Ministry of Transportation</i>	14

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ALBERTA BEEF INDUSTRY PRIORITIES

This document is intended to summarize the major priorities for the Alberta beef industry as of May 2019 and was developed by Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) and the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association (ACFA) with input from individual beef producers and other industry groups. Although the recommendations are broken down by ministry, we recognize that all recommendations apply to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as our main contact with the Alberta government.

It should be noted that we also addressed applicable excerpts from the UCP Election Platform titled "*United Conservatives; Alberta Strong and Free; Getting Alberta Back To Work*" (2019). Those excerpts from the UCP platform are highlighted in blue throughout this document.

In short, our top priorities for the Alberta Government in the immediate term are:

- 1. Increase funding for beef, feed grains, and forage research and innovations.**
- 2. Increase provincial funding of local government rural infrastructure systems that support agriculture and agri-food, particularly roadways and bridges.** Enable municipalities to boost their infrastructure investments by modernizing property tax assessment and taxation of farmland.
- 3. Better access to labour by improving the Temporary Foreign Workers program and the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program and creating improved paths to permanency for foreign agriculture workers.**
- 4. Ensure long-term secure tenure of grazing leases and implement the modernized Alberta Grazing Rental Rate Framework that was developed by all grazing associations in Alberta.**
- 5. Improve labour legislation so that it is more applicable and practical for farms and ranches, while ensuring proper protections for farm and ranch employees.**

In addition, there are additional subsidiary recommendations that we would like to highlight from this document including:

- 6. Continue to improve the Business Risk Management programs for the beef industry.**
 - AFSC hay, pasture, lack of moisture, and production insurance products
 - Wildlife compensation for livestock depredation and crop damage
- 7. Review and revise transport regulations to be more practicable for farms and ranches (including the MELT Program).**
- 8. Reduce bureaucratic red tape that inhibit the ability to do business in areas such as:**
 - Grazing lease and permit transfers and renewals
 - Approvals for water permits, licenses, lease improvements, etc.
 - Temporary Foreign Worker application and approval process

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Ensure that farmers, not government, set key agriculture research priorities (p28)

Fight back against attacks on agriculture by well-funded special interests (p28)

Albertan's property rights will be thoroughly protected by a new Alberta Property Rights Protection Act and a review of all existing legislation (p49, p87)

- *Create a Property and Farmer's Rights Advocate Office out of the existing two offices*

Important Note: While we have specific recommendations for the Ministry of Agriculture outlined below, **we expect the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and staff to advocate for the agriculture industry to other ministries and cabinet on all issues of importance in this document.**

Research and Extension

Research priority areas include **animal health and welfare (including antimicrobial use and resistance), feed grains and feed efficiency, forage and grassland productivity (including environment), beef quality, and food safety.** More detailed industry research and extension objectives can be found in the Canadian Beef Research and Technology Transfer Strategy. The Alberta beef industry recommends:

- **The Alberta Government increase beef, feed grains, and forage research and innovation funding.**
- **The Alberta Agriculture's Science, Research and Innovation Framework should be aligned with the Canadian Beef Research and Technology Transfer Strategy,** focusing on prioritizing areas in which Alberta has established expertise.
- **Alberta Agriculture reinstate the "Ropin' the Web" website**
- **Government develop a clear direction and focus for those employees whose main job description includes extension, and this should be shared with industry.**
- **Alberta Agriculture eliminate restrictions that inhibit government researchers from accessing grant funding from the province.**
- **Involving industry throughout all stages of the Strategic Research and Development application process,** including the sharing of letters of intent and full proposals for review will help decrease duplication, increase opportunities for co-funding, and ensure alignment of industry and government priorities.
- **Renewing the Alberta Beef, Forage and Grazing Centre Agreement,** which expires March 31, 2020.
- **The government support industry efforts to expand dispensing options for medically important antimicrobials.** While the beef industry supports the requirement for all medically important antimicrobials to be available by prescription only, we do not support restricting dispensing of these products to veterinary clinics (or in extremely rare cases, pharmacies) alone.

- **The government continue to support improving public perception and trust of the Alberta beef industry including environmental benefits, human health, and other benefits.**

Risk Management

Streamline the AFSC to improve services and responsiveness to farmers (p28)

Perform a comprehensive review of risk mitigation programs

- **Improve diagnostic and surveillance capacity in the province for domestic and wildlife diseases.** These efforts need to be aligned with, and supportive of, national initiatives in these areas and not be focused on Alberta alone.
- **Reinstatement of the CCIA Mobile Field Representatives.** Although Alberta has the highest level of Premise Identification Number compliance in the country, it is not 100%, and there are many instances of incorrect information within the database. The Mobile Field Representatives help to ensure improved compliance and information accuracy. The Mobile Field Representatives also would be valuable in helping producers deal with the requirements of the federal traceability framework that is expected within the next year.
- **Government continue working with industry and other relevant stakeholders regarding enhanced emergency preparedness.**
- **Ensure and invest in on-going adjustments and improvements to AFSC programs for livestock producers, especially in the area of forage and pasture insurance.**

Agriculture Operation Practices Act

- **The Government strengthen the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA)** to ensure that the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) has authority over the location and approvals for confined feeding operations (CFOs).

Forestry and Grazing

- **Government should streamline the approval process for making range improvements on grazing dispositions,** including removal of encroaching forests and brush.
 - This could include improving re-forestation policies to include provisions to not replant in certain areas where forest has encroached on important rangelands.

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

Public Lands and Land Use Planning

Support environmentally sustainable forestry practices by working with Alberta's forestry companies to optimize land management practices (p39)

Consult on land sales in order to replace good agricultural land lost to urban expansion by cooperating with municipalities seeking auctions on parcels of Crown land for ag use, where appropriate (p28)

Apply a mandatory \$30 trail permit fee for OHV and camping to pay for restoration, trails, and enforcement (p85)

*Implement a balanced back country land use plan to ensure all Albertans can enjoy public lands
Ensure that more department staff work in the outdoors with local stakeholders (p86)*

Create statutory tort action for adversely affected downstream private landowners, so they can deal more easily with illegal drainage of wetlands (p86)

Ensure that the province's land use consultations and planning are completed before any new long-term decisions are made about habitat protection (p40)

Our Environment will be protected by a common-sense conservation plan which recognizes that recreation, economic use, and conservation can and should support each other (p49)

Government needs to continue to recognize the importance of grazing leases on public lands for conservation, the provision of ecological goods and services to society, and the long-term viability of the beef industry. To ensure leases continue to work for the public as well as livestock producers, we recommend:

- **Immediate implementation of the modernized Alberta Public Land Grazing Rental Rate Framework as developed by Alberta Beef Producers and partnering grazing stakeholder associations.**
- **The government commit to long term (20 year) secure tenure of leases, grazing permits, and grazing reserves throughout Alberta** and including the Castle Park and Bighorn Country areas.
- **Government finalize and implement the “Tenure for Stewardship” concept** to ensure greater security of tenure for those who maintain the health of public lands under grazing dispositions.
- **Government must streamline the approval process for making range improvements on grazing dispositions**, including removal of encroaching forests and brush.
 - This could include improving re-forestation policies to include provisions to not replant in certain areas where forest has encroached on important rangelands.
- **The AEP department improve efficiencies in processing applications for permits, licenses, and projects, including water allocation approvals, grazing lease renewals and transfers of ownership, project approvals for off-stream watering systems, etc.**

- **Government take the time to properly consult and develop management plans with grazing stakeholders before any land use changes are implemented in the Bighorn Country.** This could include completion of the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan and ensuring that any Bighorn Country development is consistent with this plan.
- **Government explore increased grazing opportunities on public lands in Northern Alberta.**
- **Ensure that any sale of public land does not create an unfair competitive advantage for other land use interests over livestock producers. Any sale of public land must consider:**
 - Long term grazing leaseholders and proper stewardship
 - Conservation goals of potential buyers
- **The Government strengthen the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA)** to ensure that the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) has authority over the location and approvals for CFOs.

Ecological Goods and Services

Encourage and increase the use of development credits and conservation offsets in provincial development policy

Increase funding by \$5 million per year to the Alberta Land Trust Grant Program for supporting conservation (p85)

Protect streams on the Eastern slopes by adding \$1 million per year in funding to the Cows and Fish program (p85) while seeking matching funds from the private sector

End costly subsidies after the Renewable Energy Program's round 3 (p36)

- **The AB government support the creation and further development of payment for ecosystem services (PES) programs** that will provide incentives for beneficial land and water management practices to preserve critical grassland, improve environmental health, water quality, and build resiliency into the beef sector.
- **The government consider establishing public lands under grazing dispositions as “Other Effective Conservation Measures” (OECMs) that would contribute to Canada’s Target 1 goals for conservation and biodiversity.** This would also ensure long term stewardship and secure tenure for grazing disposition holders.
- **The AB government continue to invest in research to improve forage and feed quality, soil health, rangeland and riparian health, animal and crop genetics, and animal health for increased production efficiency and reduced environmental impact per kg of beef produced.**
- **The Alberta government invest a portion of the funds generated from the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reductions (TIER) Fund in on-farm and industry energy efficiency and economical renewable energy** to reduce the impact of increased energy costs, especially energy for the feedlot and processing sectors.

Wildlife Management and Damage Compensation on Private Lands

- **Government invest in (both in staff time and financial) improvements to the predator compensation program and the development of mitigation best management practices to reduce conflict between wildlife and landowners.**
- **When developing wildlife management strategies for species at risk or other wildlife, landowners must be included in the development of these strategies (for example, Grizzly Bear recovery plans, and reintroduction of Bison onto lands adjacent to landowners).**
- **The development and implementation of a long-term, fully-resourced, management strategy for diseased or infected wildlife, including TB infected bison residing in and around Wood Buffalo National Park and elk populations infected with liver flukes.**
- **The Alberta Government keep Plains Bison classified as livestock, not wildlife.**
- **The Government develop a Bighorn-Domestic Sheep separation policy that is regional and specific to the areas where interaction could occur, rather than a blanket province wide separation line (ie: no domestic sheep west of Hwy 22).**

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION

Access to Labour

Implementation of the “Alberta Advantage Immigration Plan” which will include (p41):

- *Ending large backlogs and speed up processing times*
- *Create a “Rural Entrepreneur Immigration Program” that will invite entrepreneurs to start new businesses in smaller Alberta communities*
- *Create a “Rural Renewal Immigration Program” that would prioritize applications from foreigners who are committed to living and working in smaller communities throughout Alberta.*
- *Make Alberta a destination for global entrepreneurs through the creation of streams within the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program*

Our industry continues to face significant challenges finding a sufficient labour force to meet business opportunities. Improvements to the Temporary Foreign Workers Program and the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program will be very welcome in the beef industry. The beef industry recommends the Government of Alberta:

- **Improve the efficiency for labour approvals in the TFW and AINP programs.**
 - Significantly reduce red tape, time for application processing, etc
- **Transition more TFWs into permanent residents.**
- **Streamline and increase the target numbers in the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program.**
 - Including reducing restrictive educational and English language proficiency requirements for agricultural workers to transition to permanent residency.
- **Adjust labour classifications for immigrants to allow for more agricultural workers.**
 - Change entrance requirements under the TFW program to a concrete job offer in agriculture rather than under the National Occupation Classification system
- **Explore the creation of a new foreign labour program specific to agriculture.**

Farm and Ranch Safety

Introduce the Farm Freedom and Safety Act (FFSA) in 2019 which will include:

- *Comprehensive consultations with farmers, ranchers, ag workers to develop a common sense and flexible farm safety regime (p27)*
- *Repeal Bill 6*
- *Ensure basic safety standards*

Alberta’s beef industry strongly supports **improved health and safety for all people working on farms and ranches, not just waged, non-family employees.** Alberta Beef Producers and the Alberta Cattle Feeders’ Association are founding members of AgSafe Alberta, a producer-led farm and ranch safety association.

Alberta Beef Producers and the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association participated in an AgCoalition working group to translate the OHS Code into practical guidelines that would meet the legislative intent for safety, while providing safe practices that make sense on a farm or ranch. The Government accepted all recommendations from this group which included amendments and exemptions to the existing Code, as well as legislated new Code requirements specific to farm and ranches. Our recommendations to government include:

- **Ensure the OHS Guidelines and OHS Code amendments and exemptions for farms and ranches developed in the previous government are included in the new Farm Safety Act.**
- **Conduct full consultation with farms and ranches with any proposed changes to farm safety and employment legislation to ensure it is practical on farms.**
- **On farm investigations and reporting of serious incidents and fatalities should continue as an important measure to reduce these incidents from occurring in the future.**
- **OHS officers need to have a very good understanding of how a farm and ranch operates and how to interact respectfully and effectively with farm and ranch owners.**
- **The government repeals Bill 30 as it is too complex in the requirements for OHS and WCB for farm and ranch owners to implement.**
- **Ensure the Farm Freedom and Safety Act addresses one specific issue such as farm safety. If it includes other labour legislation, we recommend a separate act to address those issues.**

Employment Standards

Give employers choice of employee insurance that works best for their operation, but still require a minimum level of insurance(p27)

Exempt small farms from employment legislation (with 3 or fewer employees over a substantial period of the year, not including family members).

Recognize that operating a farm is unique and that farmers and ranchers need more flexibility in meeting employment standards (p28)

- **The beef industry supports a requirement for employers to have sufficient (or a minimum level of) insurance for their workers, but employers should be given the option to choose the insurance provider that works the best for their business and employees.**
- **Further revisions and improvements to youth employment standards that are more practical to farm families are welcomed.**
- **Labour code and employment standards for agriculture must be dealt with in separate legislation from farm safety as they are different issues.**

Right to collective action/Unions

Restoring the mandatory secret ballot for union certification votes

- **The beef industry is not confident that current models of labour legislation provide sufficient protection for animal welfare and food security in the case of a labour disruption and as a result, we don't support allowing farms and ranch workers to form unions and take collective action.**
- **We support the repeal of Bill 17.**
- **The beef industry also supports the restoration of the mandatory secret ballot for union certification votes.**

ASSOCIATE MINISTRY FOR RED TAPE REDUCTION

Form industry panels to help the Minister identify unnecessary red tape in every sector of Alberta's economy (p24)

Move from a process to outcome-based regulatory approach (p25)

Fight for an end to interprovincial barriers to free trade (p25)

Minimize the red tape burden on farmers and ranchers (p28)

- **Alberta beef industry strongly recommends that the provincial government improve efficiencies in processing applications for permits, licenses, and projects, including water allocation approvals, grazing lease renewals and transfers of ownership, and foreign labour applications, where delays inhibit the ability of producers to run their businesses efficiently.**
- **Alberta beef industry strongly supports reducing regulations that negatively impact the economic or environmental viability of beef farms and ranches. Interprovincial trade barriers are an example of regulations within Canada that need improvement.**
- **Alberta beef industry supports reducing interprovincial trade barriers such as meat inspection and processing rules that inhibit the flow of beef across provincial boundaries.**
- **Alberta beef industry supports the development of a beef industry panel to help the Minister identify areas for improvement in reducing red tape.**

MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Municipalities will get more autonomy and predictability while we ensure transparency for voters

Ensure predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities (p77)

Amend the MGA to allow municipalities to offer property tax incentives to attract investment and development (p77)

Rural Infrastructure Investment

Agriculture has the potential to lead the diversification of the Alberta economy, and become recognized as the most sustainable agriculture industry in the world. However, to accomplish this we will require significantly more investment in rural infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water systems, technology, innovation, and integrated agricultural commodity systems. In addition, investment in information technology, including high speed rural internet and cell phone coverage will be key to the long-term viability of many rural communities. The beef industry recommends:

- **The provincial government modernize the property tax assessment and overall taxation system of farmland to reduce the implementation of unfair municipal taxes** such as the Livestock Head Tax on Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs) in Lethbridge County.
- **The provincial government significantly invest in rural infrastructure to reduce the deficit in funding for infrastructure that rural municipalities face.**
- **The Government complete rural high-speed internet to rural communities to ensure people will continue to be attracted to live in these rural communities.** This investment will also help fulfill the goals in the “*Rural Entrepreneur and Renewal Immigration*” Programs.
- **Alberta beef industry would support municipal property tax incentives for recognizing environmental stewardship, ecological services, community support or other recognition of sustainable agricultural practices.**

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE, AND TOURISM

Reduction of the large corporate tax rate from 12% to 8% over 4 years

Keeping the small business rate at 2%

Fight for market access and reduce interprovincial trade barriers (p28)

- **Alberta beef industry supports the reductions in corporate and small business taxes.**
- **Beef producers also support initiatives that will help diversify income streams on farms and ranches such as payments for ecosystem services or carbon credits and offsets.**

MINISTRY OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

- **The Government of Alberta reinstate funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, while proceeding with the current planned enhancements of the University of Calgary's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine's student and infrastructure capacity.**

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

- **The Government of Alberta consult with the agriculture sector regarding implications to regulatory changes to the Mandatory Entry Level Training (MELT) program in order to address and resolve the unintended consequences that stand to have a significant impact on farming operations.**
 - A farm specific (F) endorsement for on-farm operations would allow farmers and their employees to obtain their license on a more timely basis, by excluding training that does not apply to farm operations and may apply specific (stricter) parameters for F endorsed drivers that limits them to farm operations only.

For questions regarding these positions or other policy inquires not included in this briefing note, please reach out to:

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