



## Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association

### ***Media Release***

*For immediate Release*

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### **Stock Growers Support Changes to Easement and Habitat Legislation**

“Amendments to Saskatchewan’s Conservation Easement and Wildlife Habitat legislation currently before the Saskatchewan legislature are positive developments for farm and ranch families that will ensure continued conservation of the natural environment,” said Calvin Knoss, President of the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association (SSGA) today.

According to Knoss, “Cattle producers who do not hold title to their land, lack the stability and long term security that comes with ownership as well as the advantages that equity in land offers to those looking for financing for their operations.” The province recognizes the value that producers place in owning lands that are integral to their operations. The proposed changes are a win-win situation that enables lessees to own their land while meeting the government’s conservation goals.

“Saskatchewan’s cattle producers are dedicated stewards of the province’s grassland resource, and should be entitled to own the land they had been preserving for over a century,” said Knoss. Knoss emphasized, “It is worth remembering that when the current Wildlife Habitat Protection Act was created, much of the prairie grassland identified as worthy of preservation was in a relatively pristine state precisely because Saskatchewan cattle producers had been working diligently for generations to preserve it.”

According to Knoss, there are inconsistencies in the way lands have been identified for ecological protection in the past. In addition, the criteria had not been applied evenly across the province. Knoss explained that the revamped classification system recognized by the amendments provides sound ecological criteria that can be applied equitably across the province.

“Furthermore, people shouldn’t be getting the idea that any of the land available for sale has not previously been open to grazing by leaseholders. These lands have been grazed by ranchers and farmers for over a century and by the buffalo before we arrived. And we continue to graze them in a sustainable manner today. Grassland ecologists have long recognized the critical role played by large grazing animals like cattle in preserving grassland ecosystems,” added Knoss.

Knoss surmised that “sceptical people who don’t appreciate just how strong the ecological ethic is among this province’s ranchers should be reassured by the conservation easement provisions contained in the amendments. Lessees purchasing Crown land will be required to accept easement provisions that prevent breaking up

sensitive grassland or draining wetlands.”

Knoss summed up the SSGA’s position by saying, “the amendments do not put sensitive habitat lands in danger by allowing the people most responsible for their preservation to own them. What they do achieve is to allow farm and ranch families to become landowners as opposed to tenants. The right to own the land you farm has been a cornerstone of prairie agriculture since our province was settled. We believe extending that right to leaseholders is a progressive development.”

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Representatives will be available for comment following question period.

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