

ISSUE IN FOCUS



Celebrating 100 Years

SASKATCHEWAN
CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE

Saskatchewan's Water Management Strategy

Background:

As a semi-arid prairie province, Saskatchewan is reliant on the inflow of water from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and internal watersheds for irrigation, sanitation, consumption, and recreation. Businesses throughout the province have a significant reliance on water for use in day-to-day operations, most notably in farming, manufacturing, potash mining, and resort communities. While the province has historically been susceptible to both droughts and floods, experts insist that the threat of climate change will exacerbate the frequency and intensity of these events.

Issue:

Water management is rapidly changing. The principal drivers of that change are rapid industrial growth and development, the impacts of climate change, and the needs of increasingly stressed ecosystems.

The lack of clear and well-defined roles for all levels of government, along with the lack of a cohesive vision for water management across government agencies, the private sector, and civil society organizations has produced a fragmented approach. In the absence of a SWSA-led water council and the lack of fuller integration of water management duties under the Ministry of Environment, it is more important than ever to have a coordinated approach to water management in the province. The ad-hoc approach is no longer sustainable.

Recommendations:

1. That the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce promote the creation of a stand-alone, single-table entity known as the Water Council for Saskatchewan considering SWSA's decision not to move ahead with their own water council concept.

2. That the Water Council for Saskatchewan seek out a diverse array of key stakeholders (government, private industry, non-profit groups, indigenous communities etc.) to change the governance structure around water use management in the province to be more holistic, strategic, and collaborative.
3. That the Water Council for Saskatchewan create a comprehensive provincial water strategy that helps support the goals and action items outlined in the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency's 25 Year Water Security Plan.
4. That the Water Council for Saskatchewan collaborate with technical experts at the University of Saskatchewan's Global Institute for Water Security and the Saskatchewan Polytechnic Water Management Program to better identify the location, quality, and quantity of water for the purposes of developing a more reliable database of information to identify future trends.
5. That the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce continue to recommend to the Government of Saskatchewan that SWSA be fully integrated under the Ministry of Environment and that it shifts away from the permitting process toward more performance-based activities.
6. That the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce encourage the Government of Saskatchewan to work with the Government of Canada and neighbouring provincial governments to update the Saskatchewan-Nelson Basin Study and other relevant studies so that they can be used to improve decision-making on water management and investment policies.
7. That the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce promote the use of irrigation (where appropriate) as a catalyst for water-based, value-added economic development, particularly in agri-food and food processing.

History:

Adopted Policy Resolution 2007

Adopted Policy Resolution 2008

Adopted Policy Resolution 2009

Adopted Policy Resolution 2010

Adopted Policy Resolution 2012

Adopted Policy Resolution 2013

Letter to Minister of Environment 2018

Letter to Minister of Environment 2020