

## **PUBLIC PASTURES – PUBLIC INTEREST**

**MEDIA RELEASE - For immediate release**

**Friday October 30, 2020**

### **Municipal Vote an Opportunity for Habitat Protection**

**Regina, Saskatchewan** Public Pastures – Public Interest is reminding people that municipal governments have a key role on land use decisions and that attitudes toward habitat protection should be a consideration when we vote for town and RM councils on November 9.

Cities can make better choices in building roads and urban expansion. The Northeast swale in Saskatoon is one example, as well as the housing development all around the city, where urban sprawl is expanding into semi-natural habitat.

In Regina, the City could invest in natural, climate-change resilient infrastructure by expanding and restoring natural areas such as the McKell Conservation Area. The decommissioned Craig golf course near the airport could be turned into a natural area restored to native grasses, a place where students and visitors could learn about grassland and see what the land was like before it became a city.

Rural municipality reeves and councilors make decisions on discretionary land use. They are on the front line when it comes to land use and habitat destruction or remediation by major developments such as potash mines and rural estates.

Undeveloped road allowances are critical ribbons of habitat which provide corridors for wildlife to travel and remnant landscape for rare plants and insects. When these public lands are cleared and broke by adjacent landowners the conservation values are lost. Local R.M.s have the authority to discourage and prevent the destruction of unused public road allowances and some R.M.s do enforce their preservation. Municipalities and cities could play a leadership role in working with conservation NGOs and government agencies to conserve and restore marginal habitats in ditches and road allowances. Wetlands, grasslands and aspen bluffs all help to make our landscapes more resilient in the face of climate challenges presented by drought and flooding, and reduce the nutrient load that causes algae in our rivers and lakes.

During the recent provincial election PPPI put forward a list of recommendations for action for MLA candidates. <https://pfrapastureposts.wordpress.com/saskatchewan-2020-election/> PPPPI is also working with other groups to bring more federal resources to preserving grasslands.

Temperate grasslands are the most threatened biomes on the planet. Less than 10 percent of Saskatchewan's original prairie remains. Saskatchewan's grasslands are a precious natural resource, the reason we are called a prairie province. There is a groundswell of support recognizing the grasslands' role in carbon sequestration, providing critical habitat for Species at Risk and providing pastures where livestock production is part of the natural ecological cycle.

**Bringing the Land onto the Public Agenda:** A 4-minute evocative film about the importance of grasslands to Saskatchewan <https://youtu.be/eQ3H4Ego7WY>

*Formed in 2012, the mission of Public Pastures - Public Interest (PPPI) is to retain and conserve publicly-owned grasslands and advocate for the conservation and protection of Saskatchewan's remaining prairie grassland ecosystems.*

#### **For further information:**

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## PPPI RECOMMENDATIONS TO ELECTION CANDIDATES

1. Keep Crown grasslands publicly-owned and protected from development, including former PFRA and provincial pastures. Halt the sale of public land with ecological value including Crown lands that, until removed by recent Order-in-Council, had been protected under the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act.
2. Work with the federal government on additional resources needed to manage public values such as: biodiversity, carbon sequestration, ecosystem conservation, and public access. Support ranchers and others working to preserve grasslands.
3. Conduct a complete inventory of our remaining native grasslands.
4. Create Saskatchewan legislation that recognizes the value of our remaining native grassland.
5. Protect native prairie, including monitoring and enforcing Conservation Easements preventing breaking of these lands. Once native prairie is broken it cannot be restored.
6. Strengthen the Environmental Assessment process to better involve the public and protect the remaining grasslands from development.



**SASKATCHEWAN:**  
**Original grasslands lost: 90%**  
**Wetlands drained: 50%**

**This election vote for candidates who will defend our  
grasslands and wetlands.**

**This election vote for the land.**

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