

TO THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

A Presentation on the “International St. Mary-Milk Rivers Administrative Measures Task Force” Report - by Keith Francis, Chairman of the Taber Irrigation District

I would like to thank the IJC for their determination that the “Task Force” appointed by them was to consider “measures for improvements to existing administrative procedures of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers apportionment to ensure more beneficial use and optimal receipt by each country within the terms of the 1921 Order”.

The principle of “First in Time, First in Right” used by both countries provides and shows that the existing Agreement is fair and right according to this principle and should not be changed. I thank them for the decision not to change the Agreement or the 1921 Order. I would like to submit to the Commission that the present balancing system is also fair and right, and any significant changes to it would not be fair or just.

The Province of Alberta, the Taber Irrigation District, and the farmers within that district have invested millions of dollars to develop an irrigation system dependent upon an assured supply of water provided for them through the terms of the existing agreement and Order.

Any change or interruption to that supply of water would prove devastating to the economy of the Taber area, and all of southern Alberta.

The Taber Irrigation District has 82,200 acres of irrigated land and also conveys water to the Town of Taber, Village of Barnwell, Lamb Weston Potato Plant, Rogers Sugar Beet Processing plant (the only sugar beet factory in Canada), several cattle feed lots, and Husky Oil for water injection as well as for rural and domestic needs. Other value added industries in Taber include Hostess Frito Lay Plant, Lucerne Vegetable Plant and Agricore United Dry Bean Plant. Within the Taber Irrigation District there are 5,000 acres of sugar beets grown, 10,000 acres of potatoes, 6,600 acres of corn and peas, 5,800 acres of dry beans and 600 acres of onions plus other small crops.

The investment to produce and process these crops is very significant and has occurred because of irrigation and the assurance of a dependable supply of water. To make any significant change to the “Balancing formula” would put that assured water supply at risk for the farmers and processors within the Taber Irrigation District and could result in a devastating negative affect on the economy of our area and the province as a whole.

The existing formula has served both countries well for over 84 years and should not be changed.

Montana should first rehabilitate their infrastructure before asking for a change in something that is fair and equitable and has served us both for these many years.

Once they are able to take the water allocated to them under the existing formula, they may find that there is less need for a change in what we have now.

Perhaps a dam built on the St. Mary river in Alberta near the Montana border, paid for by both countries, would allow Montana to divert their share of the water from the St. Mary river into the Milk River, and they could abandon their worn-out infrastructure.