

ON BEHALF OF THE OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL
Mr. Chairman,

The Oldman Watershed Council is a society composed of volunteers, committed to the maintenance and improvement of the quality of life and therefore the quality of the water in the Oldman River Watershed. We are grounded in the Government of Alberta's Water for Life Strategy, which established the three main goals or outcomes of:

- A safe, secure drinking water supply
- Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

As a Watershed Planning and Advisory Committee, the OWC has existed for only 14 months, yet it already boasts a membership of 248 drawn from the population of 170,000. Our stakeholders represent a diverse field of interests such as crop water users, agricultural industries, agricultural producer groups, urban and rural municipalities, environmental and conservation groups, academia, and individual landowners.

Our stakeholders gather together in community to discuss issues relating to water. Everything we do is based on our mission statement, which is:

To maintain and improve the Oldman River Watershed through partnerships, knowledge and the implementation and integration of sustainable water management and land use practices.

We have 5 working teams that focus ^{on} ~~in~~ issues such as data collection and integration and the testing and implementation of beneficial management practices in agriculture. Our immediate goal is to produce a State of the Watershed Report, which will lead to the development and implementation of an Integrated Watershed Management Plan. This plan will allow us to develop our watershed in a manner that minimises impacts on water now and in the future.

We have a huge stake in the watershed, which includes the St. Mary River system, which feeds a large portion of 1.5 million acres of irrigation, and many urban, commercial and recreational facilities. Our watershed contains a multitude of benefits ranging from our natural capital to infrastructure developed by residents over many years. All this has resulted in major economic activity.

Although this river is not normally considered part of the Oldman Watershed, the diversion of water from the St. Mary River to the Milk River compels us to consider both rivers together.

Based on who we are and what we do, we take great interest in the IJC Task Force Report and it's implications. We commend the Task Force on making significant progress towards dealing with the issue set before it. As a group desiring to live by an integrated watershed plan, we encourage the Task Force to continue moving towards a broader scope for problem solving. We believe watershed management decisions should be made by the players involved, preferably on a watershed basis. We further believe the IJC Task Force work and report is a first good step in this direction.

Specific issues for us are:

1. **Monitoring.** We believe both parties in the Milk River and St. Mary River Watersheds should move towards more accurate real-time monitoring and reporting. Ideally, both parties should use similar and compatible methodologies.
2. **Balancing Period.** We encourage short term reporting periods – even daily - to enable all users to achieve the most benefit from available water during the period in which it is most needed.
3. **In-Stream Flow Needs.** Final decisions should consider In-stream flow needs. The aquatic and riparian systems should not be forgotten.

Discussions should remain open in the future to continually seek resolutions to deemed or real problems. Any barriers to such discussions should be recognised, and addressed to provide a continuous friendly environment that fosters decisions acceptable to all, to provide improved benefits to all water users in the two basins.

Thank you, for giving us the opportunity to address you.
We wish you well in your deliberations.

GERHARDT HARTMAN