



NEWS RELEASE – October 16, 2019

Minister of Environment and Parks, Jason Nixon, tabled Bill 16 the Public Lands Modernization (Grazing Lease and Obsolete Provisions) Amendment Act yesterday. Bill 16 includes much-needed modernizations to the rent and assignment fees ranchers pay government for grazing dispositions on Crown lands. These proposed changes will create a system that is based on markets and profitability.

The new proposed formula is market-based and as such, rental rates will change slightly each year to reflect the changes in the market prices. If passed, these changes would be phased in over five years to avoid drastic changes in costs to ranchers. With a market-based formula, this does not necessarily mean a rent increase. Government is also proposing a flat-rate assignment fee of \$3,150 which would remove red tape for ranchers and reduce barriers to entry into the industry.

If the bill is passed, a portion of revenues would be reinvested in a rangeland sustainability fund. Thirty percent of revenues over \$2.5 million will be set aside for rangeland sustainability initiatives. The other seventy percent will go to general revenue.

The current grazing fee framework has been frozen since 1994, and is built on outdated assumptions and data. The proposed framework would better reflect the current economic reality faced by ranchers, and strengthen Alberta's beef industry.

"We have been talking to government about this for over 10 years so we are ecstatic this has finally gone the next step to table the necessary legislative change. This bill is the culmination of years of work on the part of all the grazing industry groups. We all came together in an unprecedented effort with government and consulted, compromised, discussed, drafted and finalized a proposal reflective of the industry needs in response to the threats and challenges the prior system made us vulnerable to," says WSGA President Aaron Brower.

"We are especially grateful for the collaborative effort of industry groups to make this happen; Western Stock Growers' Association, Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association, Alberta Beef Producers, Northern Alberta Grazing Association, Central Alberta Grazing Association and Alberta Environment and Parks staff all contributed to the development of the proposal. Through the years, this project has brought us all together and solidified a good working relationship," says Brower.

"Ranchers play an important role in Alberta – they support our economy and are responsible for protecting some of the province's important grasslands and wetlands. It's important that we work with ranchers to modernize our legislation so that the ranching industry can continue to grow and thrive for generations," says Minister Nixon.

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