

Saskatchewan Provincial Pastures Land

Participation

The Government of Saskatchewan recently announced its intention to end the Saskatchewan Pastures Program and consult on the future management of the land. The program includes 50 pastures that, in 2015, supported approximately five per cent of the provincial beef cattle herd.

The Government of Saskatchewan sought input from pasture patrons, farmers, ranchers, industry stakeholders, environmental groups, First Nations, Métis communities, and other interested citizens on how pasture land formerly used for the Saskatchewan Pastures Program should be managed in the future.

Various options were put forward in the discussion of how to best ensure continued environmental stewardship and ongoing grazing opportunities for Saskatchewan's livestock producers. Participants were asked to consider whether current pasture patrons should be given preference to enter into long-term lease agreements, similar to the model adopted when the federal pasture program ceased. Other options were also considered, such as the idea of ranch units, which could involve a combination of purchased land and land under long-term lease.

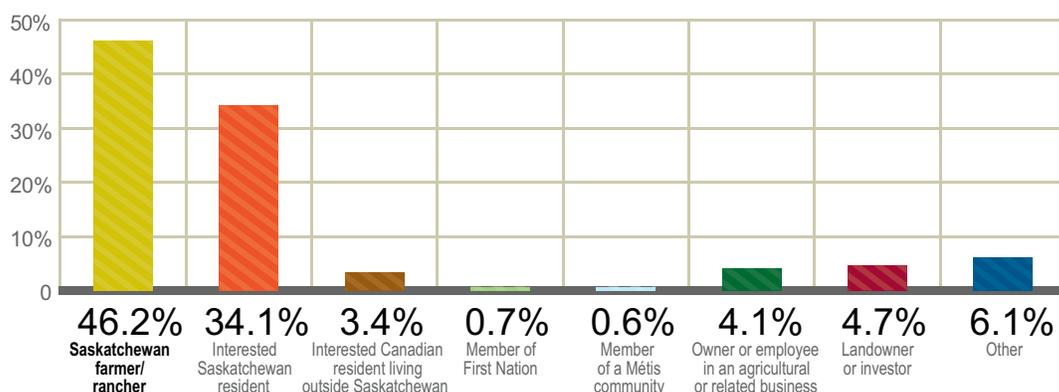
There were several guiding principles underlying the public engagement and consultation processes, including that existing pasture patrons be respected throughout the process, and that the ecological integrity of the land be preserved, including the protection of environmentally sensitive parcels through the application of *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

Public engagement was open from March 27 to May 8, 2017, through an online survey posted on the Government of Saskatchewan website. There were also three meetings with current pasture patrons in Moose Jaw, North Battleford and Tisdale. As well, meetings were held by invitation with several industry and environmental stakeholder groups. There were also two days of consultations with First Nations and Métis communities.

In all, 2,016 surveys were completed. The majority of surveys, more than 46 per cent, were completed by Saskatchewan farmers or ranchers. Additionally, nearly 30 per cent of respondents identified themselves as patrons of the Saskatchewan Pastures Program, and nearly 73 per cent of survey respondents said they live within 50 kilometres of land used for the program.

Demographics

Farmers and ranchers accounted for 46 per cent of completed surveys.



Summary of Results from Public Engagement

Key findings include:

Responsible stewardship

Overall, the majority of survey participants (76 per cent) placed a higher importance on ecological preservation of land over economic opportunities. Almost three-quarters of total respondents indicated some level of agreement that Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers act as responsible stewards of the land they own and operate.

“The ecological and social benefits of these natural areas are endless, and need to be preserved and managed properly for future generations.”

Connection to the land

Almost 51 per cent of respondents indicated they had used the land for hunting or activities such as gathering plants for cultural or medicinal use. Continued public access for activities such as hunting and traditional uses were seen as important.

“These pasture lands mean a lot to me and the people surrounding them. My grandfather, my father, and I have hunted in these pastures.”

The Patron first

There was broad support for the idea of providing existing patrons with the first option to lease pastures. Respondents who identified as farmers and ranchers expressed this most strongly, but most other demographic groups also supported existing patrons having this opportunity.

“The first priority must be current patrons. If they are not interested in the land, it should be available to other groups.”

Public ownership

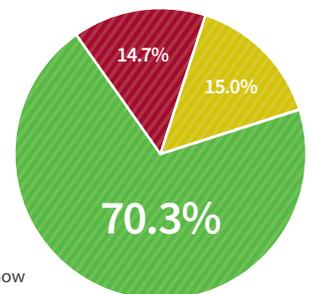
The majority of participants opposed the idea of sale of land that is part of the Saskatchewan Pastures Program. Nearly 60 per cent of respondents opposed the idea of sale, with a similar proportion indicating they would not support the idea of land being sub-divided into smaller parcels where feasible to make it more practical to manage, lease or sell. Opposition to the sale of land was generally driven by environmental concerns.

“This sensitive prairie ecosystem needs to be protected. It should not be for sale nor should it be sub-divided.”

Support

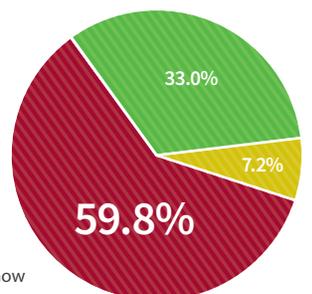
Do you support previous patrons of the Saskatchewan Pastures Program having the right of first refusal to lease government-owned pasture land?

Yes
No
Don't know



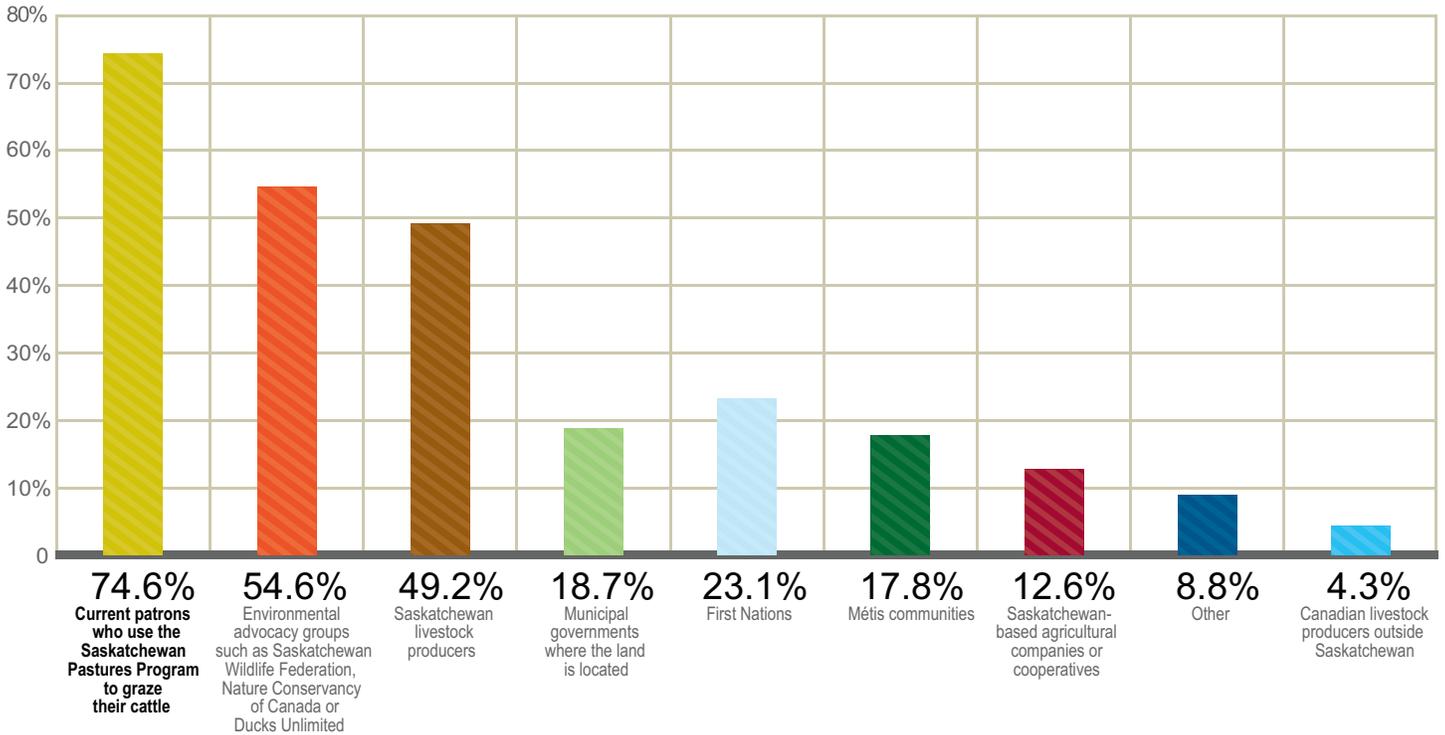
Do you support the government making pasture land formerly used for the Saskatchewan Pastures Program available for purchase provided that:
a) the land is purchased at fair market value; and
b) the future use of the land is subject to the provisions of *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* to ensure any identified ecological value is preserved?

Yes
No
Don't know



Support

Would you support the Government of Saskatchewan entering into agreements with any of the following groups to allow them to manage and operate pasture land previously used for the Saskatchewan Pastures Program?



The complete survey results are available at www.saskatchewan.ca/pastures

The Government of Saskatchewan would like to thank all participants for sharing their views on this important issue.

