

To the Members of the International Joint Commission

I would like to take this opportunity to make a brief presentation in the public hearings being held at this time concerning the apportionment of river water between U.S.A. and Canada.

I am an irrigation farmer in the Taber Irrigation District located in and around Taber, Alberta. It is a district of 82,200 acres and 500 water users.

The Taber Irrigation District is part of what is known in southern Alberta as the Palliser Triangle; an area of semi-desert located in south east Alberta and south west Saskatchewan. Palliser, an early-day explorer, saw the southern portion of the Canadian Prairies as an extension of the great American desert. The average rainfall in the Taber Irrigation District is 10-11 inches (250-275mm.) We have had as low as a little over 6 inches to a high of just over 17 inches but our average is about 11 inches.

Pioneers came to the Taber area at the beginning of the 20th Century (around 1900) to take up homesteads. They soon found that the area was very dry. When water became available from the St. Mary River, the farmers in the Taber-Barnwell area got together and constructed a canal to bring the water to their parched lands. The Taber Irrigation District was the first irrigation district organized in Alberta under the Alberta Irrigation Districts Act of 1915. The soil and climate is very suitable for irrigation and it was not long before sugar beets, corn, potatoes, and many other vegetables were being grown in the Taber area.

Today, in our district alone, we grow

22,000 acres of cereal crops,

29,000 acres of forage

27,000 acres of specialty crops, including:

5,200 acres of dry beans

3,846 acres of fresh, sweet corn

1,671 acres of fresh peas

11,000 acres of potatoes

4,300 acres of sugar beets

600 acres of onions

130 acres of sunflower

100 acres of carrots and a small acreage of several other specialty crops.

To process these crops we have:

the only Sugar Beet Processing plant in Canada,

Lamb-Weston (a subsidiary of Con-Agra) Potato Plant,

Hostess Frito-Lay potato chip plant,

a vegetable processing plant,
a dry bean plant,
an onion plant,
a Timothy hay plant,
fresh market corn producers and
a large number of cattle and feed lots.

These are here because of irrigation. They expect and rely on an assured supply of irrigation water. The economic benefit of all of this to our area is tremendous. Without irrigation the Taber area would be what it was before irrigation - a semi-desert.

From our understanding of the agreement between Canada and the United States, we in the Taber Irrigation District feel it is fair and equitable, and see no need for the 1921 order to be opened and reviewed.

Sufficient study of it has already taken place. Any change that would alter or reduce the amount of water available to the irrigation districts of southern Alberta would create unsustainable hardships to the people of southern Alberta.

Respectfully submitted:



Keith Francis, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Taber Irrigation District.