



# BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

*Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia*

AGRI CENTRE - #4 - 10145 DALLAS DRIVE, KAMLOOPS, B.C. V2C 6T4 PHONE (250) 573-3611 FAX (250) 573-5155

*December 11, 2023*

**Hon. Bruce Ralston**

**Minister of Forests**

PO BOX 9049, STN PROV GOVT.

Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

[FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

*BCCA File: 2023-050*

*SENT BY EMAIL*

Dear Minister Ralston,

## **RE: Landscape Resilience and Wildfires**

---

The BCCA long advocated for policy that re-balances value of the landscape; moving away from a timber-centric paradigm, to one that manages for broader values on the landscape, including values like forage, wetlands and other aquatic habitats. While this shift would benefit the ranching sector, it is increasingly clear that this shift would help support other values, including ecological values like habitat and biodiversity, and socio-economic values, like vibrant rural and Indigenous communities, profitable industries and a landscape that is resilient to the effects of drought, flooding and wildfire.

The BCCA is encouraged to see government begin to recognize these important connections, through substantive policy changes like the removal of “without unduly reducing the supply of timber” from British Columbia’s forests of timber centric language in the Forest Policy and Practices Regulation, as well as through the release of B.C.’s draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework that will help guide decision making to consider values across the landscape and across various activities.

It is also notable and encouraging to see other groups in society making these important connections to healthy landscapes and resilience. As an important example of this work, the BCCA commends the Forest Practices Board (FPB) for the release of their special report into Wildfire and Landscape Resilience<sup>1</sup>. This report clearly articulates the fact that climate change, fire suppression and forest management practices over the past century have caused fuel accumulation that place nearly half of B.C.’s public land in high or extreme risk of wildfire; a situation that creates significant social, ecological and economic implications for B.C.

This report provides excellent direction to government on key elements of the path forward toward landscape resilience, including the need to take an ‘all-of-government’ approach to managing fuels on the landscape. The report also notes that the scale of change required will require cooperation across society; something that the BCCA welcomes and looks forward to participating in. With many of BC’s public lands being part of the crown Agricultural Land Reserve and/or having some form of grazing tenure associated with it, ranchers on the landscape have a key role in stewardship and would welcome

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bcfpb.ca/release-publications/releases/forest-and-fire-management-in-bc-toward-landscape-resilience/>

further discussions about partnerships that reduce fuel on the landscape through a variety of means and that support broad values.

It is clear that resilience requires a focus on fuel management. While forest policy has a large role to play in this, there are also other key opportunities being profiled through industry innovation. As you will recall from previous engagement, BCCA has spearheaded work on 'Targeting Grazing', through a series of pilot projects on communities across BC where cattle are used to graze fine fuels and lower wildfire risk in strategic places, such as WUI zones. These projects have provided tangible benefits in the reduction of fine fuels and are an example of ways that our sector is partnering on solutions.

The BCCA would also like to highlight the importance of taking a holistic view of landscape resilience that includes a focus on watershed health. As many of our members have seen in past years, water on the landscape is critical for minimizing wildfire risk, providing key assets during active wildfire management and a critical consideration during landscape recovery. It is also critical to mention that many of the stored water on the landscape is as a result of structures like dams that are managed by the ranching sector and conservation partners who together own and manage hundreds of dams provincially. An all of government approach to resilience must prioritize keeping water on the landscape and creating financial, regulatory and administrative conditions that facilitate water storage of various types and sizes; from small dugouts to larger lakes.

The BCCA looks forward to your Ministry's response to this report, and to being a partner in helping to reduce fuel loads on the landscape and creating resilient landscapes into the future.



Brian Thomas, President  
BC Cattlemen's Association