

## No Common Ground in Quill Lakes Drainage Plan

Earlier this week the Quill Lakes Watershed Association (QLWA) announced that it was withdrawing its application to the Water Security Agency (WSA) to proceed with its Common Ground Drainage Plan. The Saskatchewan Alliance for Water Sustainability (SAWS), a group of concerned downstream citizens in the Last Mountain Lake and Qu'Appelle chain of Lakes, while relieved with this decision remains very disappointed and sceptical of the entire process, the lack of transparency, and lack of consultation the QLWA, the Province, WSA, and the Ministry of Environment displayed throughout the entire process. Our Government failed the people of Saskatchewan by working with the QLWA and by avoiding the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment.

SAWS is equally disappointed to learn in the documents acquired from WSA, through a Freedom of Information request, that the project would send saline water to Last Mountain Lake, (contrary to QLWA's repeated claims that it is fresh). WSA stated the project would have minimal impact on Quill lake water levels. SAWS was extremely concerned to learn the Ministry of Environment and WSA both supported the QLWA's preferred direction to not provide draft information to stakeholders who expressed concerns or had questions about the drainage project.

While Mother Nature is to blame for the recent high moisture in Saskatchewan, SAWS believes and WSA has stated, that decades of illegal drainage has played a role in the rising of the Quill Lakes levels. In WSA's Responsible Drainage in the Quill Lakes Fact Sheet, WSA says that the Quill Lakes are one of the highest risk areas in the Province because of the flooding impacts to farmland and infrastructure. SAWS is dedicated to finding the solutions by bringing together the best and the brightest, which includes our five levels of government, our Universities and our industries. We have a second chance. The Quill Lakes have receded. Let's take this opportunity to ensure we do it right. We believe in the capacity of this province that by working together we will find solutions. We need trust and collaboration and we want it now.

Like the Pasqua First Nations, we believe that this project will be resubmitted at a future date and we are hopeful that a court order would ensure this project goes through a proper independent environmental review and consultation. The QLWA is a drainage association established to build drainage projects, so they will continue to work to drain water from the Quill Lakes to Last Mountain Lakes.

SAWS is very supportive of agriculture and sympathetic for the Quill Lakes farmers who are flooded and the solution is not to pass that flood and the saline water onto someone else. We fully support efforts to find a safe project to handle the real flooding crisis at Quill Lakes, provided it goes through a full and independent Environmental Impact Assessment and protects downstream communities.

We expect a course correction from our Government, the Department of Environment and WSA. We must change the method in how we approach this challenge. We need to investigate all possibilities not just one. WSA calls the Quill Lakes situation one of the most complicated water management issues in Canada. So let's give it one of the **best** solutions for Canada.

For more information please contact  
[SASKAWS@gmail.com](mailto:SASKAWS@gmail.com)

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