



WESTON FAMILY PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS INITIATIVE

Media Release

Weston Family Foundation invests an additional \$37 million to safeguard one of Canada's most ecologically valuable and threatened ecosystems

The conservation initiative brings together Indigenous communities, ranchers, and conservation organizations to protect Canada's critical prairie grasslands.

Toronto – June 16, 2026 - The Weston Family Foundation just announced an additional \$37 million in funding through the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative, strengthening and scaling one of the largest prairie grasslands conservation efforts in Canadian history, and bringing the Foundation's total commitment to \$70 million over ten years.

Stretching across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, Canada's prairie grasslands support hundreds of species, including migratory birds, pollinators and people, while also sustaining soil health, water systems, and livestock production. Yet of the roughly 141 million acres of historical grasslands in Canada, only 26 million acres remain intact today.



Weston Family
Foundation

“Canada’s prairie grasslands are some of the most ecologically valuable and threatened ecosystems in the world, and we have a responsibility to protect them for future generations,” said **Christian Bauta, Chair, Weston Family Foundation**. “There’s no singular solution. These are working landscapes and protecting them means supporting a range of long-term solutions that reflect the realities of the people connected to the land; their knowledge, their livelihoods, and their long history of stewardship.”

Originally launched in 2021 with \$30 million awarded to five organizations, the Initiative has already demonstrated significant measurable impact. Between 2021 and 2024, participating organizations helped support conservation activities across more than 1.2 million acres of grasslands habitat, trained more than 3,500 land stewards in various management practices, and established hundreds of ecological management agreements and conservation easements.

The Initiative’s second phase builds on those results by supporting projects focused on land stewardship, economic viability, and training—recognizing that only a systems approach will protect the grasslands. From Indigenous-led stewardship and prescribed fire to conservation agreements and adaptive grazing practices, the Prairie Grassland Initiative brings together approaches shaped by local knowledge, economic realities, and the day-to-day experience of working on the land.

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 Southern Alberta Land Trust Society

The ten funded projects include:

- **Ducks Unlimited Canada** providing ranchers and beef producers with financial support and practical tools to facilitate long-term grassland conservation.
- **Food Water Wellness Foundation** creating a prairie-wide ecosystem services marketplace that pays producers for protecting biodiversity, water, and carbon storage.
- **Káínai (Blood Tribe)** restoring Blackfoot stewardship practices through cultural burning, seasonal land management, and intergenerational learning.
- **kihci-okāwīmāw askiy Knowledge Centre and Indigenous Kinship Circle** connecting First Nations through Indigenous-led stewardship, mentorship, and knowledge sharing across the Prairies.
- **Meewasin Valley Authority** expanding prescribed fire initiatives across the Prairie provinces to improve grassland health and strengthen local fire stewardship.
- **Nature Conservancy of Canada** delivering stewardship and habitat management projects across community-managed grazing lands.
- **Oldman Watershed Council** renewing southern Alberta grasslands through riparian restoration, bison grazing, cultural burning, and watershed partnerships.
- **Saskatchewan Stock Growers Foundation** working with ranchers and Indigenous partners to expand flexible conservation agreements across Saskatchewan grasslands.
- **South of the Divide Conservation Action Program** creating mentorship and training hubs for prairie pasture managers and community-based land stewards.
- **Southern Alberta Land Trust Society** helping ranching families navigate conservation easements to support succession planning and their vision to keep native grasslands intact.

For more information about the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative, visit www.westonfoundation.ca

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ABOUT THE WESTON FAMILY PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS INITIATIVE:

The Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative is a ten-year, \$70 million commitment to the long-term protection of biodiversity within one of Canada's most ecologically valuable and threatened ecosystems. The Initiative is centred around collaborative, community-led projects that draw on local expertise and Indigenous knowledge to promote best land stewardship practices, address the economic pressures influencing land use, and deliver training, tools, and resources that support the future of Canada's Prairie Grasslands.

ABOUT THE WESTON FAMILY FOUNDATION:

At the Weston Family Foundation (formerly The W. Garfield Weston Foundation), more than 60 years of philanthropy has taught us that there is a relationship between healthy landscapes and healthy people. Which is why we champion world-class health research and innovation with the same passion that we support initiatives to protect and restore biodiversity on Canada's unique landscapes. Our spark, shepherd, scale approach to research ensures the best ideas have the best chance of success. We take a collaborative approach to philanthropy, working alongside forward-thinking partners to advance Canada and create lasting impacts. We aspire to do more than provide funding; we want to enable others to find transformational ways to improve the well-being of Canadians.

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