

Give BC farming a super present. December 1996 Column, Country Life in B.C.

Wendy R. Holm, P.Ag.

We need to talk about our relationship. We've been together for what? Three years now? Once a month, regular as clockwork. Pretty committed. You must admit, it's been a long time since I've asked you for *anything*, right? And it's not as though I haven't been holding up my end of the bargain, writing you this nice, demure little column on a regular basis and all...

And this *is* Christmas... The season of giving. A time between preparing for winter and getting ready for spring when the pressure's off and there's finally time for a little serious relaxing and sharing with family, friends and (hint, hint) *YOUR FAVOURITE COLUMNISTS...*

Okay, Okay. Cutting to the chase, I think its time we formalized our commitment to this relationship by putting me on your gift list!

My needs are simple. And straight-forward. No shopping, no hassles, no line-ups, no exchanges. ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS THIS COLUMN FAXED. Or mailed. With a quick note of support. To Premier Glen Clark and Senator Eugene Whelan. Before the New Year.

*The Right Honourable Jean Chretien
Parliament Buildings
OTTAWA, Canada
fax:*

Dear Prime Minister;

As Premier of British Columbia, I am writing to request that you to invite the United States government to join Canada in a reference before the International Joint Commission to value more accurately the benefits to Americans under the Columbia Treaty.

As you are aware, the operation of Canadian storage dams (Mica, Keenlyside, Duncan) on the British Columbia portion of the Columbia River system in accordance with the terms of the Columbia Treaty confers numerous downstream benefits to Americans, including hydroelectricity, irrigation, transportation, fisheries, tourism, environment and recreation.

At present, Americans pay only for hydroelectric benefits. This is somewhat analogous to selling a house based on the square footage of the kitchen alone.

An agreement of the length and duration of the Columbia Treaty (we are now at the 30 year point in a 60 year treaty) should clearly have been subject to at least a mid-term review to remedy shortcomings not anticipated at the original signing.

The absence of such a review has been gravely prejudicial to British Columbia's interests. Without proper evaluation of Treaty benefits to Americans, Canada's resources are drawn down in a wasteful manner detrimental to the public interest in sustainable management of our farm, fisheries, water, habitat, economic, community and environmental resources.

Reshaping the Treaty consistent with past, present and future benefits to Americans and the ongoing priorities of Canadians is not only appropriate and possible, it is long overdue.

Consequently, I am writing to formally request that the Government of Canada invite the Americans to join us in a joint reference before the International Joint Commission to place in abeyance Article 7 of the Treaty (Determination of Downstream Benefits) and commence hearings to reassess the measure, extent and delivery of benefits within the Columbia drainage basin to better manage it in the interests of all stakeholders.

I ask this on behalf of British Columbia's farm and environmental communities and the future of all British Columbians.

Yours sincerely,

*The Honourable Glen Clark,
Premier of British Columbia*

c.c. Senator Eugene Whelan

"Ah yes" I can hear you all murmuring "Good idea. I hope she gets a good response from farmers on this one." BUT GUESS WHAT? Unless YOU (who have more vested interest in this than anybody and finally a little time on your hands) are not sufficiently motivated *by now* to follow through yourself on this (e.g. *get up in the next few minutes, clip this column and put it on the table to mail or fax in the next day or so*), then it's quite likely that no-one else will be, either. It just won't happen.

So. It's in your hands. A chance in a million: a federal election in the offing, a no-brainer for the Province, the mid-point in a 60 year treaty and strong support for this position from B.C.'s environmental community. Visions of sugar-plums pale in comparison to what could be accomplished with agriculture's slice of a much-enlarged downstream benefits pie.

(Why should Americans bite at this opportunity? Cause drainage basin sustainability makes sense to residents on both sides of the border. And if they don't, Canada just might abandon the anti-dumping route and play her "heavier" trade retaliation card: a countervail duty threat against US food imports reliant on highly subsidized federal irrigation water...)

Now really! How often do you have the chance to make such a HUGE difference with such a tiny little act? And just think of how good you'll feel over Christmas dinner knowing you did something nice for the future of your family and your community.

C'mon 'n show me I mean more to you than just another quick read... Fax off the column to Clark and Whelan like good boys and girls and just maybe there'll be some extra goodies under the tree for B.C. farmers. What could it hurt to try?

Premier Glen Clark	Senator Eugene Whelan
Legislative Buildings	Senate of Canada
VICTORIA V8V 1X4	OTTAWA K1A 0A4
fax: (250) 387-0087	fax: (613) 947-4837

THIS COLUMN WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY SPECIAL REQUEST FROM THE MANY FARMERS ACROSS THIS PROVINCE WHO HAVE PULLED ME ASIDE TO TELL ME THEY CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE LETTING THIS ONE GO AND HAVE ASKED ME TO "GIVE IT ONE MORE SHOT". HERE IT IS. GO FOR IT...