

July 9, 2020

Hon. George Heyman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Box 9047, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Heyman,

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce thanks you for your letter of July 9, 2020 and we appreciate that BC Parks has investigated the potential purchase of the Chelsea Estate adjacent to Ellison Provincial Park.

We fully understand limited budgets and competing priorities as our members – business owners and non-profits – experience the same challenges on a daily basis. But while there is a monetary price to acquiring the Chelsea Estate, there is a price if we do nothing, particularly as our province faces climate change and much of the Okanagan’s natural ecosystem is considered sensitive. As you indicate in your letter, “BC Parks recognizes that the ecological and recreational values that the Chelsea Estate contains are complementary to those in the adjacent Ellison Provincial Park.”

There is also a significant cost if there aren’t investments in economic development. In the case of adding the Chelsea Estate to Ellison Provincial Park, it would further the North Okanagan’s reputation as a tourism destination as mountain biking and hiking are increasingly popular with visitors. The North Okanagan and the Province can only benefit from the spinoff benefits of acquiring this property.

We also believe that protecting this special location will bolster our Province’s relationship with the Syilx people, who have called this land home for generations.

In your letter, you state that “Should other significant contributors to this acquisition be identified, BC Parks remains prepared to discuss ways in which this property could be acquired for public benefit.” We would urge you to immediately direct BC Parks staff to proactively seek out potential partners such as public and private foundations and government at all levels. In fact, partnerships between BC Parks, foundations and all levels of government have made other provincial parks possible in the North Okanagan. It is also necessary to keep communications open with the property owner.

Ultimately, what is required is a vision of what can be achieved not only for the North Okanagan but for all British Columbians now and in the future. Opportunities of a lifetime only surface occasionally and that means we must use all measures possible to bring them to reality.

As a Chamber, we pledge our support to work with your government and BC Parks to identify potential partners and to establish those connections.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Krystin Kempton, President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC: Lisa Beare, Minister of Tourism
Eric Foster, Vernon-Monashee MLA
Norm Letnick, Kelowna-Lake Country MLA
Adam Olsen, BC Green Party Interim Leader
Byron Louis, Okanagan Indian Band Chief
Kevin Acton, Regional District of North Okanagan Chair
Victor Cumming, City of Vernon Mayor
Jim Garlick, District of Coldstream Mayor
Gail Given, Regional District of Central Okanagan Chair
James Baker, District of Lake Country Mayor
Brad Pelletier, Predator Ridge Golf Resort
Hans-Peter Mayr, Sparkling Hill Resort
North Okanagan Cycling Society
Claus Larsen, City of Vernon Tourism Commission
North Okanagan Naturalists Club
Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
Lake Country Chamber of Commerce
Okanagan Nation Alliance
Allan Brooks Nature Centre
Okanagan Landing Community Association
Mike Brown