

January 21, 2020

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
British Columbia
C/o nancywilkin@gmail.com

Honourable Katrine Conroy
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
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Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
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Dear Minister Conroy,

Happy New Year to you and your colleagues! Harry and I are writing on behalf of your Wildlife Advisory Council to let you know how pleased the Council members were with your attendance and enthusiasm at our December 14th, 2020 meeting. We also greatly appreciated the attendance of Minister Cullen, Parliamentary Secretary Russell, Deputy Halls and Assistant Deputy Muter.

Your knowledge and passion for wildlife in British Columbia was evident and inspiring. Words such as "wildlife and habitat are a symbol of a sustainable future for our land, for our wealth and our cultural richness" and "excellence in wildlife and habitat stewardship" inspired all of us.

Our shared hope in joining the Wildlife Advisory Council is to foster a paradigm shift in resource management in British Columbia. We support actions that lead to thriving and resilient wildlife populations and habitats, advance reconciliation, and facilitate new regional governance structures.

Some of the expectations we heard at our meeting with you include:

1. The Council will be a highly functional team producing practical solutions to complex and socially sensitive problems - working in a collegial non-partisan way, with clear measures of success to communicate to the public.
2. The Council will become a model for advancing reconciliation, honouring the commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the B.C. Declaration Act.
3. The Council will support transparent implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy which will help rebuild trust among the many different organizations involved in the conservation of wildlife in British Columbia.
4. The Council will collaborate with provincial initiatives such as Species at Risk, Old Growth, Land Use Planning, Forest and Range Practices Act updates (including Forest Landscape Planning), to determine how these initiatives and the Together for Wildlife strategy can work together to achieve common goals and objectives.
5. The Council will recommend a new dedicated funding model and opportunities for innovative partnerships to leverage dollars for wildlife and habitat, starting with the \$10 million permanent lift to the Wildlife and Habitat budget.
6. The Council will advise on improving natural and social science information and research to support better decisions, and on ways to align decision-making with Indigenous Knowledge and expertise.
7. The Council will advise on the establishment of world class wildlife and habitat stewardship objectives, finding common ground among diverse interests, and building on successful models of co-management and joint decision making in B.C.
8. The Council will make recommendations to build on the spirit and intent of the Bill introduced by your honour in 2016 that proposed a Sustainable Wildlife Management Act to give greater priority to wildlife in provincial statutes.

To harness our backgrounds and make our time on the Council efficient, we have established 5 Working Groups based on the priorities laid out in the Together for Wildlife Strategy: 1) Funding, 2) Research, 3) Reconciliation and Governance, 4) Stewardship and Objectives, and 5) Foundations (Transparency/Accountability). In addition, we have identified three immediate actions that we believe support the long-term vision of the new government and the Council:

First, we recommend that a letter be sent to your colleagues on the Environmental Land Use Committee to introduce the Together for Wildlife Strategy and Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council. A draft letter has been prepared by Wildlife and Habitat Branch staff for your approval, with the Together for Wildlife Strategy attached, as well as a one-page summary of the Vision, Goals, and Actions. The Council members feel this letter would be an excellent first step in having your colleagues learn first-hand about the strategy and the Council, and would help open communication with other ministries as the Council's work proceeds.

Second, we request that Council be involved in a comprehensive review of the Wildlife Act, as mandated in the Together for Wildlife Strategy. We recognize that short-term amendments to the Wildlife Act are currently being considered and that legislative changes will likely be foundational to reconciliation. The Council supports reconciliation, and we hope to become a model of how Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders can work together towards a better, more equitable, and sustainable society.

Third, we recommend direction be given to your ministry leads for the Forests and Range Practices Act and the Old Growth Strategic Review to collaborate with Council on shared priorities. We kindly request a meeting between these groups and the Council to exchange information and understand how the Together for Wildlife Strategy could support and be part of the outcomes of other priority provincial initiatives. Also, within your ministry, Council supports the ongoing work between staff and industry to implement positive policy changes regarding forestry roads rehabilitation.

Council will look forward to hearing from you on your consideration of these three short term actions.

Once again, our thanks for such an excellent beginning for *your* Council and for a promising start to making the Together for Wildlife Strategy a reality for the people and wildlife of British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Nancy Wilkin and Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.)
Co-Chairs, Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

CC:

Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Roly Russell, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development
John Allan, Deputy Minister, Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Secretariat
David Muter, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Stewardship Division
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council