



July 14, 2020

Mr. Felix Schellenberg  
Mr. Lars Satre  
Mr. Dean Miller  
Mr. Michael Bayliff  
Chilcotin Ranchers  
[info@chilcotinranchers.ca](mailto:info@chilcotinranchers.ca)

Dear Mr. Schellenberg, Mr. Satre, Mr. Miller and Mr. Bayliff:

Thank you for your correspondence dated April 8, 2020 and April 28, 2020, sent to the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, and other federal and provincial government officials. I acknowledge the concerns you raised in the letters relating to the issues of ranchers and farmers within the T̓silhqot̓in Declared Title Area, your frustration from the lack of transparency and inclusiveness in negotiations, and your request that negotiations be halted during the COVID-19 situation. I am responding on behalf of the Minister.

As you are aware, on June 26, 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered its unanimous judgement in *T̓silhqot̓in Nation v British Columbia*, recognizing the Aboriginal title of the T̓silhqot̓in Nation to areas of the T̓silhqot̓in Territory (the “Declared Title Area”). Aboriginal title includes the right to the occupation of the land, the right to proactively manage and decide how the land is used, and the right to the economic benefit of the lands and resources.

In order to provide more clarity in terms of what the decision means for the role of the federal and provincial governments and the T̓silhqot̓in Nation, and for the interests of third parties, including ranchers and farmers going forward, T̓silhqot̓in Nation, British Columbia and Canada negotiated and signed the 2019 *Gwets̓en Nilt̓i Pathway Agreement*. Sub-agreements will be negotiated to support self-government by the T̓silhqot̓in Nation and the transition of the Declared Title Area.

Regarding your concerns relating to ranchers, farmers and the future of your communities, as well as the negotiations process, Canada is committed to meet with you to understand your interests, answer questions and discuss how your interests may be addressed. In addition, Canada is committed to consulting other stakeholders and non-T̓silhqot̓in people at the appropriate points in the negotiation process.

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This commitment is reflected in the *Gwets'en Nilt'i Pathway Agreement*:

*12.2 The Parties will continue to work cooperatively and collaboratively to support strong T̓silhqot'in governance and management of the Declared Title Area and to foster a stable transition to full management, benefit and control of the Declared Title Area by the T̓silhqot'in Nation while respectfully engaging third parties and attempting to address their interests within the Declared Title Area.*

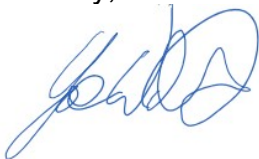
Under the 2016 Nenqay Deni Accord, British Columbia and the T̓silhqot'in continue to work bilaterally through negotiation to transition the management, benefit and control of the declared title lands, as well as additional lands outside of the declared title area. The T̓silhqot'in and British Columbia also continue to address important issues through bridging agreements. Canada is supportive of the continued efforts of British Columbia and the T̓silhqot'in Nation. I will let our provincial colleagues speak to their processes and specific issues around provincial tenures.

Concerning your request to include a representative of your choice at the tripartite negotiation table, please note that both federal and provincial governments have negotiators at the table, with responsibilities that include considering and bringing to the table broader societal concerns. The federal negotiation team will ensure the other parties to the negotiations are informed when you raise concerns and discuss how to respond to those concerns.

You have requested that negotiations cease during the COVID-19 situation. As this is important government business, and it is unclear when we will return to normal operations, some discussions are continuing, albeit less intensively than in the recent past and with appropriate precautions during this time.

I appreciate hearing your perspective. We look forward to making positive advancements with the T̓silhqot'in Nation, partners and stakeholders. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to set up a meeting between yourselves and a representative from Canada, please contact Paul West at 604-365-9434 or [paul.west@canada.ca](mailto:paul.west@canada.ca).

Sincerely,



Joe Wild  
Senior Assistant Deputy Minister  
Treaties and Aboriginal Government

c.c.: PM Justin Trudeau  
Premier John Horgan  
Hon Bernadette Jordan  
Hon Scott Fraser