

July 8, 2020

Paul West
Negotiator - Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
1138 Melville St. Suite 600 V6E 4S3
Vancouver, British Columbia

Dear Mr. West,

On June 18, 2020 I wrote to you on behalf of many concerned tourism operators, businesses and communities in the Chilcotin region of British Columbia with regards to the unfair negotiation process being undertaken between the Tsilhqot'in First Nation and the Federal and Provincial governments regarding title land claims in the Chilcotin. Shortly after my letter was sent, I received a brief note from you stating that you "look forward to working with (us) on this delicate matter and will respond in a timely manner."

Initially heartened and encouraged by your commitment to opening a dialogue with the thousands of Canadians being impacted by these negotiations without a voice at the table, it is increasingly worrying to our communities that almost three weeks have passed since you have communicated that intent. Every day that passes is creating doubt and uncertainty for families that their rights as Canadians will be protected or that the government is seriously committed to fairness and transparency.

To reiterate our previous and most critical point, it is unfair and undemocratic for negotiations to be held in secret, with no representation whatsoever for the thousands of people whose businesses, homes and families could suffer irreparable damage depending on the final outcome. Imagine for a moment you were on the outside of this process looking in and it was your livelihood at stake. Would you support this unfair process determining your fate? It is unacceptable to business owners who have dedicated their entire lives to building thriving communities in Canada to be blatantly ignored by the government in our attempt to request basic rights.

Once more, we are appealing to you as the lead negotiator in this case to honour our rights by including our perspective in one of two ways:

1. Permit an elected or community representative of our choosing to immediately begin participating in negotiations; or
2. Create an ongoing roundtable where you will meet with elected and community representatives from the Chilcotin to hear first-hand our concerns, answer our questions, and represent our interests at the negotiating table, until direct participation can be achieved.

It is our hope and intention that we are able to move forward in good faith, with your cooperation, to begin to address our concerns with regards to the negotiations. We are, however, prepared to take a more public, focused approach if we are unable to form a working relationship with the negotiating team moving forward. We believe there is a clear duty of care owed to those of us who are impacted here and the government is badly failing to meet that duty of care.

Paul, simply put, we need to be part of the process for it to have any legitimacy and we are asking for your swift correspondence on this matter so that we can establish our involvement in a timely manner and begin working successfully towards a fair resolution for all.

It is our preference to put our energy into positive pursuits that improve the outcome and we hope that you will agree that is a better use of time and resources than forcing citizens to fight their own government and challenge any agreement that occurs without our involvement.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Rykes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Petrus Rykes
President, West Chilcotin Tourism Association

On Behalf of Canadians for Fairness and Transparency
www.canadiansforfairnessandtransparency.ca