

July 30, 2020

Dear: Felix Schellenberg, Lars Satre, Dean Miller and Michael Bayliff

Thank you for your emails of April 8 and April 28, 2020 regarding provincial negotiations with the T̓silhqot̓in Nation, particularly as they relate to ranching in the Chilcotin. I will also recognize that as this letter was being drafted, an additional correspondence was sent by Mr. Schellenberg on July 9, 2020 on your behalf. I have been asked to reply on behalf of Minister Fraser.

I would like to start by acknowledging the concern and frustration that you have expressed. The Supreme Court of Canada decision in T̓silhqot̓in Nation v British Columbia was the first declaration of Aboriginal title in Canada, and this has raised new, unique and complex issues that must be worked through and resolved, as there is a need for certainty for all those who are potentially impacted.

Aboriginal title is similar to private property, and through the court decision, T̓silhqot̓in Nation has the right to decide how the declared title area (DTA) lands and resources are used, to possess the lands, and to benefit from economic activity on them. As such, the Province is committed to working with T̓silhqot̓in Nation to find ways to ensure that the transition to full T̓silhqot̓in management of the court determined DTA lands happens as smoothly as possible and provides long-term clarity and certainty for everyone who lives and works in the area.

Working through DTA transition was a priority under the Nenqay Deni Accord between T̓silhqot̓in Nation and the Province, and will continue to be a top priority as we begin to implement the tripartite Gwet̓sen Nilt̓i Pathway Agreement with T̓silhqot̓in Nation and Canada. The Gwet̓sen Nilt̓i Pathway Agreement provides a framework to guide us through the ongoing governance transition process. We recognize the process to negotiate these agreements has taken some time and is critical to residents and businesses impacted by the Supreme Court of Canada decision. Now, in partnership with Canada we look forward to continuing the DTA transition process, which includes a strong focus on stakeholder engagement. We understand you are also writing to the federal government, and responses are being prepared by the appropriate federal representatives. Please be assured that both provincial and federal government negotiating teams are working on behalf of all citizens.

To further address your concerns about lack of transparency, I would like to elaborate on the commitment to negotiate “additional lands”.

The Nenqay Deni Accord referenced a commitment to negotiate “Category A” land, and that commitment is carried forward by the Gwet’sen Nilt’i Pathway Agreement. To date, the Provincial focus has been on the transition of the DTA lands as determined by the court, and we have not yet begun negotiations of “Category A” land. The Province will be engaging with stakeholders and local government on an ongoing basis, and before any decisions are made regarding these future negotiations that may impact interests of tenure holders or other stakeholder groups.

If you have further questions or concerns regarding ranching-specific interests, please feel free to contact Lindsey Wood, Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development. He can be reached by email at Lindsey.Wood@gov.bc.ca or by phone at 250-302-5791. Lindsey and I are available to meet with you if you would like to discuss the DTA transition process, or other areas of concerns.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

Devon Ramsay

Regional Manager

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

pc: Honourable Scott Fraser

Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation