



PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

October 29, 2018

The Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia
Cabinet of the Government of British Columbia
Deputy Ministers and Support Staff

Dear Premier Horgan:

We residents of the great North East are pretty sure that you are aware of our existence – at least in a general sort of way. Of course you are; but you probably don't think of us every day. And that's reasonable. We understand that you have an enormous jurisdiction with too many needs to number.

That said, we think it is reasonable that we at least be kept informed of decisions being made on our behalf that have the potential to wreak enormous havoc on our northern economy and especially on the lives of those who live here. Better yet, let us participate in decisions affecting us and the caribou.

Caribou Recovery has been front and centre in the minds of industry, local government, and First Nations in the North for years. We in local government have repeatedly asked for the opportunity to participate in finding viable solutions for the caribou and for the human species that shares the habitat with them and the other wild creatures.

This utterly reasonable request consistently has been set aside.

On October 19 we were shocked and dismayed to learn of the imminent creation of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area in our neighbourhood. Potentially 400,000 cubic metres of timber will be clawed back with, according to government estimates, a potential loss of a minimum of 500 jobs. We also learned of the possibility of compensation packages being developed for forest companies.

Now let us explain the full impact: these major international companies will survive; they'll simply lick their wounds and go elsewhere – like maybe to Alabama.

But for the rest of us it's different: those 500 plus workers who cannot go to Alabama will be devastated. They'll default on their mortgages; cars will be repossessed; kids won't get braces on their teeth; college education will be put on hold; grandma and grandpa will have to grow old without their children beside them; mom and pop businesses will close their doors one last time, and countless support industries will be out of business. A town will die in agony.

diverse. vast. abundant.

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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Yes, we want the caribou to thrive. The image of the caribou on our 25 cent piece daily reminds us of its proud past – and perhaps even prouder future.

But are we going to sacrifice the lives of thousands of the human species across our great province in the process – and that without consulting them; and that without any assurance that our sacrifices are going to be effective in the end?

Mr. Premier, that the elected officials of British Columbia's caribou country have not been included in the solution process is unconscionable. We expect a higher level of respect from our government.

We appreciate the pressures your government is under with Section 11, Species at Risk Act (SARA), Reconciliation, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and that your days are long, if not dull. But still we expect and require meaningful consultation and real participation in Caribou Recovery. Our expectations are reasonable.

Let me say it again, Mr. Premier, the human species everywhere shares territory with all other species. Our challenge is to learn to share the territory respectfully, acknowledging that human needs and rights are at least as important as those of the caribou and may, indeed, take precedence from time to time. (I have always maintained that If I meet a bear on the trail and it is either him or me, it ain't gonna be me; but as a vegetarian, I won't go out of my way to shoot a bear – or a caribou, for that matter.)

Lest our governments forget, I respectfully remind you that Victoria, Ottawa, and most other great cities in our great country were once pristine forests, homes to birds and beasts of countless varieties that no longer can live on our streets – perhaps with the exception of the coyote.

I also remind you that, not to single out any particular city, but to single out one, Vancouver in Beautiful British Columbia was once a primeval forest of giant trees, since clear cut to provide living space for human beings who pushed the bears and foxes and ungulates a little farther back into the mountains.

Our northern communities also, urban and rural, occupy lands that once upon a time were pristine wilderness. Then the people came and came and came. Some became farmers and cleared the forests for harvests of grain and cattle, others by nature were loggers and harvested the woodlands for the boards and beams used to build the houses in cities like Victoria and Ottawa. Others became merchants, teachers, health-care workers, mechanics, drivers, and all the other countless services that make our communities home sweet home.

We will not easily give up our homes built over generations by blood, sweat, and even tears. But that is what some people advocate for the sake of preserving a herd of caribou. But let's not be hypocritical. You also live in houses made of wood from our forests, heated by gas from the North East wells, lighted by the latent energy of water captured behind massive earth-filled dams, and use transit, either private or public, the steel frames of which are 50% coal from open-pit mines. Oh yes, look hard and you will find 100 tons of metallurgical coal from an open-pit mine in every

“eco-friendly” wind tower. Yes, even our mines are at risk. Think again, Mr. Premier, before you shut us down.

You need us. We need you.

And all of us need the animals, birds, fish, insects, and flora that the Creator placed on this round globe for us to manage.

We believe there is a solution. Let us, with other interested entities, help you find it.

Oh, by the way, take a moment and calculate the truck loads of metallurgical coal that must be mined every year from our hills just to keep North America in fingernail clippers. And in every truck, a human driver with hopes and dreams.

Mr. Premier, thank you for the job you are doing and please give us meaningful participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Sperling', written in a cursive style.

Chair Sperling
On behalf of the Peace River Regional District Board