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August 10th, 2015

The Honourable Andrew Wilkinson, Minister of Advanced Education

Dear Minister,

Re: The Darling Lake Trail Refurbishment Project

My name is Chris Ludwig and I am the current Cabins and Trails Committee Chair for the B.C. Mountaineering Club (B.C.M.C.). I am writing you regarding the project that I am spearheading to restore and improve the Darling Lake Hiking Trail that was built in the 1990s; a project that is run solely by hard working and dedicated volunteers. This route has been a historical access route for the B.C.M.C. since the 1960s.

The Darling Lake Trail begins at the new Skookum Creek Power Project, 20 kilometers East of the city of Squamish, and is intended to provide non-mechanized access to the mountains of Southern Garibaldi Park, including the major and spectacular summit of Mamquam Mountain.

The creation of the Skookum Creek private power project, as enabled by your government, has given rise to a unique and positive relationship between industry and non-mechanized users such as us. The B.C.M.C., along with other non-mechanized user groups, have benefited from vastly improved road access resulting from the creation of this and other private power projects. Furthermore, the operators of the Skookum Dam have been very welcoming of our activities on their road and in the vicinity of their infrastructure, and have demonstrated a consistent willingness to engage in authentic and meaningful consultation with members of the public such as myself.

Unfortunately, such consultation and co-operation has proven more difficult and elusive to establish with B.C. Parks officials in Squamish. Despite that Garibaldi Park owes its very existence to past B.C.M.C. efforts, it is surprising and ironic that B.C. Parks seems no longer interested in entertaining our initiatives and volunteer efforts with regards to the park. This is all the more puzzling considering that this amazing trail and recreational opportunity imposes an insignificant environmental impact when placed in the context of other recent commercial development, and even the activities of B.C. Parks itself with regards to its use of mechanized equipment for trail and campground maintenance. Furthermore, the costs associated with the Darling Lake Trail Project are borne out solely by volunteers rather than the taxpayer and has a positive benefit on local tourism and the physical health of British Columbians. As volunteers, we are puzzled as to why B.C. Parks is not embracing our efforts to collaborate with them to restore this historic hiking and climbing trail.

I acknowledge that the Darling Lake Trail is not included in the now aging 25 year-old Garibaldi Park Master Plan. In fact, virtually no mention of this region of Garibaldi Park is

made in the master plan. Many circumstances, however, have dramatically changed since 1990. For instance, the Skookum Creek Power Project did not exist when the original Master Plan was crafted 25 years ago.

I believe that if the current aged Master Plan does not allow room for B.C. Parks to enter into discussion with an experienced, passionate group of volunteers from the B.C.M.C.; a club with a long proud history of quality trail building in British Columbia, then I believe the time has come to open up the Garibaldi Park Master Plan to make it once again relevant and responsive to the citizens of this Province.

The opposition of B.C. Parks with regards to the Darling Lake Trail is contrary and inconsistent with the mandate and wording of the current master plan. For instance, the Darling Lake Trail is intended "...to provide and encourage low level wilderness opportunities in a pristine natural environment with no developed facilities (wilderness conservation zone)" as is stated in the master plan. Furthermore, it was clearly stated and acknowledged 20 years ago that "Garibaldi has traditionally been a wilderness park; however, the change in recreation use patterns and the increase in demand for more opportunities suggest this role should be reviewed." It clearly is not the mandate of B.C. Parks to limit or deny the rights of the citizens of this Province to enter Garibaldi Park, nor is stated anywhere in the master plan that the area around Darling Lake is restricted or sensitive in any way. Finally, it is also not stated in the master plan that public access to Garibaldi Park is to be limited to the five traditional trailheads of Diamond Head, Rubble Creek, Cheakamus Lake, Singing Pass and Wedgemount Lake.

It is my hope that the Minister will be able to foster much needed dialogue and initiate a joint planning process between B.C. Parks and the B.C.M.C. regarding the Darling Lake Trail.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Chris Ludwig

B.C.M.C. Cabins and Trails Chair