

Assistant Deputy Minister Frank Blasetti
Ministry of Transportation
Victoria

May 15th 2005

Dear Mr Blasetti,
Thank you for taking the time to meet with us on Wednesday next.

To be as expeditious as possible with your time, we brief our view on five subjects below that we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you. We recognize that they all have an inter-agency nature beyond MOT. To that end, we have consistently encouraged the full engagement of all agencies in land-use decisions affecting the Chief, and climbing in general in the Sea to Sky corridor. We hold the hope that your office is willing to enable this engagement toward the common goal of long-term benefit to the province. There is a great deal to gain by doing so. And, of course, we are happy to discuss other matters of concern or interest to you.

1. The future route of the Sea to Sky Highway in the Murrin Park / Murrin Canyon area.

As we brought forward in our report to your staff of January 2004, constructing a permanent 3- or 4-lane solution through the confines of the Murrin Canyon will destroy many invaluable assets that your Ministry was previously unaware of, and more generally render Murrin Provincial Park itself seriously devalued. It is also our understanding that Squamish Nation have features in the canyon area that they wish to preserve. The concept of a western Bypass, as we have outlined in general terms, would not only solve these matters, but also present a major land-use opportunity in a spectacular setting.

2. The nature and location of the proposed intersection of the STS Highway at the Chief.

We have argued consistently and with strong rationale that there are much better scenarios for all parties than the protected left-turn lane concept. Those scenarios relate to the big picture of land-use for the greater Chief area. We speak of this in terms of the benefit to the province as much as to rockclimbers. The Chief is a national asset, the most heavily-used and valued centre of its type in Canada, and the full potential for British Columbia, of both economic return and international-destination image, have not yet been realized. There is considerable opportunity in the greater Chief area for the province to score an enduring big-picture success in a field where it has not previously been noted for the fullest engagement.

3. Acquisition of the Malamute into the public domain as part of the big-picture solution for the Chief.

As your Ministry is aware, the Highway passes between the Chief and the Malamute, and no effective long-term solution to the big picture at the Chief is possible without the acquisition of the Malamute into the public domain. The Malamute was considered as proper for inclusion in Stawamus Chief Provincial Park by the province's own RPAT study team in 1994, but excluded by other less enlightened considerations. The involvement of The Land Conservancy is a clear signal that great gains are within reach.

4. The Cheakamus Gorge (Culliton-Cheakamus upgrade) and the nature and scale of reparations compensating for the damage and losses that have occurred.

As you may know, two months ago we gave MOT staff a dossier detailing the destruction from blast side-cast that occurred in the rockclimbing area of the Cheakamus Gorge below the Highway upgrade. The dossier was complete with before-and-after photos.

Ministry staff are presently fully engaged in corrections to the limited extent possible, and we believe further reparations, perhaps elsewhere, to address the permanent losses are appropriate and fair.

We have been so far unable to come forward with suggestions as to what they may be. This is due: 1) to our understanding that the influence of MOT is limited to Highway right-of way things; and 2) to uncertainty of how deep MOT and more generally the province is willing to reach. We believe a two-part solution that corrects the Cheakamus Gorge mess to the limited extent possible (as is being done), and which also goes the extra mile of fair compensation is in the best interests of the STSIP and the province. Creative steps to establish a suitable new opportunity for access to climbing could turn a public relations disaster for MOT into a win-win for all.

5. Rogues Gallery climbing area.

This roadside climbing area halfway between Squamish and Whistler is of regional significance and is affected by both the Highway 99 expansion and MOT's policy of public exclusion from the Rubble Creek Landslide Hazard Area (formerly the Garibaldi Civil Defence Zone). As we understand, design policy of the Highway 99 expansion will not change the status quo of opportunity to park and climb in the area. However, MOT's RCLHA Approving Office refuses to acknowledge public activity in the area, and threatens closure. We would like to engage in discussion on opportunities to establish an enduring public access.

We look forward to meeting you on Wednesday.

Kindest regards



Kevin McLane
Chair, Squamish Access Society.
Representing the interest of climbers in the Squamish area.

Others who will be attending on Wednesday are John Howe and Tyrone Brett, also of the Squamish Access Society, and Mandoline Clark, VP of the Climbers Access Society of British Columbia.