



Making a difference...together

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Land Acquisition

The Honourable George Heyman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4
Via email: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Heyman:

RE: PARKLAND ACQUISITION IN THE CAPITAL REGION

At its October 28, 2020 meeting, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Parks Committee passed a motion recommending that the CRD Board advocate to the provincial government to participate in further parkland acquisition in the Capital Region.

As you may be aware, the Capital Region is experiencing sustained population growth, with recent projections estimating an increase of approximately 81,500 new residents by 2038, from 418,000 people to 494,000. Much of what drives people to establish themselves in the Capital Region is our high quality of life indicators, which includes our system of local, regional, provincial and federal parks and protected areas.

These green spaces provide many important functions, including climate regulation, rainwater capture and stormwater regulation. They also protect the region's natural biodiversity and critical habitat for species and ecosystems at risk. Just as importantly, this system of parks provides outstanding opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy outdoor recreation close to where they live.

Over the last two decades, the CRD has been very successful in expanding its regional park system through its land acquisition program. Since the establishment of the Fund, the regional parks system has grown by almost 4,800 hectares through a number of land acquisitions valued at \$62.6 million. In 2019, the CRD Board extended the Fund for another 10-year period (2020-2029) at the rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment and, in 2020, the Board has approved a proposal to increase the \$20 annual household levy by \$1 per year until 2025. The Fund now generates approximately \$3.8 million per year.

This Fund positions the CRD to acquire additional regional parklands over the next decade. However, this level of funding alone is not enough to meet the need for additional parklands in the coming years. In order to be able to protect representative examples of the region's biodiversity, to meet the challenges of climate change, to protect our natural assets and to provide new opportunities for outdoor recreation, the CRD will need the assistance of senior levels of government.

The November 26, 2020 mandate letter from Premier John Horgan identifies a number of priorities for your ministry that fit well with potential land protection within the Capital Region, including the importance of creating new protected areas in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also identifies the need to work with neighbouring jurisdictions to cooperatively develop and invest in new strategies aimed at better protecting our shared wildlife and habitat corridors.

The CRD is ready to help you meet your priorities for securing new parklands and protecting important wildlife habitat. We recognize that these are important priorities for the entire province, but we feel they are especially critical on Southern Vancouver Island, given our continuing population growth and concurrent development pressures being put on our remaining wild lands.

We are ready to talk with you about ways to meet our mutual land protection objectives. We believe we can identify and put in action a thoughtful approach to securing additional parklands within the Capital Region with your help.

Sincerely,



Colin Plant
Chair, Capital Regional District Board

cc: CRD Board
Robert Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD
Larisa Hutcheson, General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Jeff Leahy, Senior Manager, Regional Parks