



Land Trust Alliance

BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 14, 2009

The Honourable Rich Coleman
Ministry of Housing and Social Development
PO Box 9058 Stn Prov Govt
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Re: Support to Environmental Organizations will Save Jobs & the Environment

Dear Minister Coleman and others noted as copied below:

The Land Trust Alliance of BC has more than 90 members, including 30 land trusts and another 23 associated stewardship and land management non-profit organizations throughout the province. Each has hundreds to thousands of members in their organizations across many BC communities. Over 500,000 acres of land throughout the province is currently protected by land trusts. These areas include lands that are used for public education, recreational access, protection of biodiversity and species at risk, and also include farms, ranches and other private lands with significant environmental features: riparian areas, species at risk, areas of high biodiversity, and those maintaining essential ecosystem services - conserved through conservation covenants or through outright ownership.

We are encouraging your ministry to re-consider the elimination or cut back to environmental organizations of BC Gaming funding for the following reasons:

- 1) the environment is the foundation of human health and well-being – the more we protect it, the cheaper it costs to provide the ecosystem services that humans require for life – fresh water, healthy food, healthy climate and air, pollution clean-up and all the other Ecosystem Services that the International Millennium Ecosystem Assessment authors have estimated is currently below 40% stable.¹
- 2) It has been demonstrated by economists that restoring degraded areas can cost up to 100 times what it would cost to conserve the area. ie. engineering projects that clean water or provide storm protection²
- 3) There is considerable employment in the environmental sector: as funding is cut back to these organizations, layoffs will increase costs to BC in terms of social services, housing, and other loss of employment consequences

¹ *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005 Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press. Washington, DC - concluded that approximately 60% of ecosystem services are degraded, and these are growing;

² *Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change in British Columbia through the Conservation of Natural Areas*. Sara J Wilson and Richard J Hebda, Land Trust Alliance of BC, 2008. Energy & Environment Business Week 29 October 2008 issue, Global Economy Losing \$2-5trn Annually From Deforestation An EU-commissioned study concludes the global economy is losing more money from the disappearance of forests than through the current banking crisis.

- 4) According to *Taking Nature's Pulse*, the scientific report on the Status of BC's ecosystems, the need to protect habitats and biodiversity is urgent in BC (more than 42% of identified species are listed as of provincial conservation concern in addition to likely reductions of ecological services³).
- 5) As reported in our 2008 report, *Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change through the Conservation of Nature*, by economist Sara J Wilson, and ecologist Richard J Hebda, protecting intact ecosystems, is the highest priority in terms of shielding us from Climate Change.
- 6) Protecting, restoring, and promoting natural ecosystems is a cost-effective method to achieve significant health and education goals. In education, research has shown the students with access to natural areas have tested higher in sciences, math, and social studies (American Institutes for Research, 2005) and are more aware of nutrition, more civil to one another, and played more cooperatively (Bell & Dymont, 2006).

As climate change and other impacts from the degradation and over-use of BC resources is a prime concern at this time, we encourage the Minister to reconsider the priority areas – as outlined in the letter of August 27th, 2009. In order to maintain and sustain the province's communities and quality of life, it is essential that environmental organizations be put to the priority list for groups to be funded through the Gaming Commission. Land Trust organizations provide direct stewardship on lands, public education about stewardship and environmental protection, and legal protection of lands through conservation covenants and acquisition. The link between outdoor activity, improved health, and resulting health care savings is well known. Our members protect and promote the natural areas that will help control the Province's health care costs in the future. Other environmental programs such as recycling, waste reduction, and greening our economy also need to be able to continue their programs, through funding from the BC Gaming Commission, including sustaining the staff and organizational capacities they have built up over the years in their communities. **Please move environmental organizations to the priority list, so that they may continue their important programs of benefit to the entire BC public.**

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Harrington
Executive Director

Kathy Dunster
Co-Chair

CC:

Premier Gordon Campbell
Ministry of Environment, Minister Barry Penner
Minister for Community and Rural Development, Bill Bennett
Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, Kevin Krueger
Gaming Enforcement & Policy Branch, Derek Sturko, Assistant Deputy Minister

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³ *Taking Nature's Pulse*, Biodiversity BC, BC Technical Subcommittee, BC Conservation Land Forum, www.biodiversitybc.org