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Cree Nation

Cold Lake
First Nations

Frog Lake
First Nations

Heart Lake
First Nation

Kehewin Cree Nation

Whitefish Lake
First Nation #128

www.tcvi.ca

April 14, 2021

The Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Kenney:

RE: Bill 64 2021 PUBLIC LANDS AMENDMENT ACT

The Chiefs of Tribal Chiefs Ventures Inc. would like to take this opportunity to bring their concerns to your attention regarding the proposed Public Lands Amendment Act by the Government of Alberta.

We understand that the primary purpose of Bill 64 is to strengthen your Ministry's jurisdiction respecting Crown lands despite existing obligations; and to enable your office to issue regulations through the Governor in Council for Alberta to enable the sale of passes for entry to Crown lands beginning with \$20 per 3-day pass and \$30 per annual pass. Indications are that this would apply to all parts of Crown lands in Alberta.

It must be stated that the choice of wording is seen as objectionable and lacking respect to First Nations on the matter of Crown lands. Bill 64 uses the word "**vacant**" in referring to certain Crown lands which offends First Nations' history, sacred teachings, Treaty relationships, and Inherent rights of First Nations.

As you may be aware, First Nations have held custody of these lands for centuries and are taught responsibilities in caring for them in sustainable ways. These lands represent their Treaty rights to hunt, fish, and gather foods for their sustenance, in addition to sustaining their livelihood, and well-being. These lands hold sacred, ceremonial, and burial sites which are being utilized today for practicing and retaining First Nations' traditions. In addition, First Nations hold fur management rights practiced with the traditional teachings of sustainability.

We would appreciate it if you and the Ministry(ies) could please provide complete clarity regarding exemptions and uses of passes, permits, licenses, leases, and other instruments that your departments apply or intend to apply to Crown lands.

Clarity is also needed on enforcement, inclusive of the knowledge, and qualifications of provincial officers. Officers are frequently contacting First Nations members and are frequently not sufficiently cognizant of Treaty rights, Inherent rights, traditional practices, and sacred sites. These matters require clarity and correction.

I refer to our earlier letter concerning the leasing of Crown lands for pastures. The earlier legislation resulted in a change in status of Crown lands and whether they were occupied Crown lands. It apparently resulted in an inability to access traplines.

Clarity is needed on all aspects related to Crown lands. The importance of the First Nations concerns cannot be understated as it impacts directly on the exercise of Treaty rights as well as Alberta's continuing obligations for meeting unfulfilled land entitlements of First Nations. Further, clarity is needed on the following:

In this Act, (e) "disposition" means any instrument executed pursuant to this Act, the former Act, The Provincial Lands Act, RSA 1942 c62, or the Dominion Lands Act (Canada), RSC 1927 c113, whereby (i) any estate or interest in land of the Crown, or (ii) any other right or privilege in respect of land of the Crown that is not an estate or interest in land, is or has been granted or conveyed by the Crown to any person, but does not include a grant.

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is committed to sustainable recreation management that ensures that public land is accessible to all Albertans for personal enjoyment and sustainable outdoor recreation.

Progressively access may be realized only by the few and not the many Albertans, particularly those living in urban areas, who do not have recreation vehicles and other equipment needed for the "personal enjoyment and sustainable outdoor recreation". Accessibility further raises the concern of sustainability and responsibility for the care of Crown lands.

We would greatly appreciate receiving full explanations on how your government understands its powers in relation to "disposition" of Crown lands and how it intends on meeting the need for consultations with First Nations.

I look forward to receiving a response with detailed information on Bill 64 and its implications. The Chiefs would be pleased to engage, if preferred, with the Government of Alberta for detailed presentations and discussions in answer to the concerns.

If you should have any questions, or require further information, please contact Cameron Alexis, Chief Executive Officer of Tribal Chiefs Ventures Inc., at calexis@tcvi.ca.

Sincerely,



Chief Vernon Watchmaker
Chair, Board of Directors

c.c.: TCVI Board of Directors
Chief Germaine Anderson, Beaver Lake Cree Nation
Chief Roger Marten, Cold Lake First Nations
Chief Greg Desjarlais, Frog Lake First Nations
Chief Curtis Monias, Heart Lake First Nation
Chief Vernon Watchmaker, Kehewin Cree Nation
Chief Tom Houle, Whitefish Lake First Nation #128

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The Honourable Rick Wilson
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Cameron Alexis, Chief Executive Officer, Tribal Chiefs Ventures Inc.