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The Lincoln's

The Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
P.O. Box 9049
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC
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CANADA

Subject: URGENT: Purchase and protection of threatened Sickle Point, Skaha Lake, Okanagan Valley, BC

Dear Minister Conroy:

I am writing to request your Ministry's and the BC government's financial support for the purchase of the Skaha Lake foreshore marshes and riparian habitat that constitute Sickle Point. This is the last piece of such land remaining on Skaha Lake. We now have what is almost certainly the last opportunity to save this important wildlife habitat.

My context in asking for your support is this. For years I worked as the provincial Fish & Wildlife Biologist in extreme southern Ontario. My District included two national gems of biodiversity; the famous Rondeau Point and Point Pelee parks – spits of land which project into Lake Erie. Both include wetlands renowned for resident and migratory wildlife. Both were being degraded by residential development. So ecologically important, there was a government program to buy back long-term cottage leases so that wetland habitat could be restored.

I subsequently accepted a 22 year tenure (1980 to 2002) as Wildlife Section Head for the Okanagan Region of the then called Ministry of Environment. In assessing Okanagan Valley bottom wetlands from the Shuswap south to Osoyoos on the American border, I soon recognized unequivocally high ecological values of Sickle Point. To advocate its purchase I took the entire board of The Nature Trust of BC on a tour of the point. While strongly agreeing with Sickle Point's ecological values, purchase was too small a project for the TNT. It was suggested I look for local funds to acquire and manage the property. Sadly, back in the early 1980's interest in habitat conservation had not yet fully developed. At that time I found little local support. That opportunity was lost.

Since then many things have changed, including habitat degradation at Sickle Point. Also changed is the public support for conservation, including Sickle Point. That environmental support continues to grow ever stronger in the face of looming climate change. From my biologist experience in Ontario I can cite an example of the importance of adaptation to climate change. Relative to vegetation, both Rondeau and Pelee are renowned for being the most northerly, and only Canadian, extension of the *Carolinian Forest ecosystem* of unusual plant species. They are 'stepping stones' for ecosystem adaptation in Ontario. Similarly, Sickle Point is near the most northerly extension of the *Columbia Basin shrub-steppe ecosystem* of unusual plant and animal species. The Okanagan Valley is an ecological corridor through which ecosystems from the south must move northward to reach BC's *Central Interior Plateau* helping our province adapt to climate change. Sickle Point is a 'stepping stone' to ecosystem adaptation in BC.

Somewhat damaged, Sickle Point still retains many ecological values. Fortunately, an unexpected second opportunity to secure the fish and wildlife habitat of Sickle Point has arisen. It has once again come up for sale. Other land developers are looking to take over from the current owner, resuming development.

To date, over 300 people, some who do not even live in the immediate area, have pledged over \$300,000 toward its purchase. While this amount is a long way from the approximately \$2.5 million asking price for the property, it indicates the importance of Sickle Point to people in the Okanagan.

I am writing to you to request your Ministry's and the BC government's financial support to purchase Sickle Point. Before the opportunity disappears we need the help of your government to purchase it so that its wildlife habitat may be restored. I hope to soon hear of your ministry's pledge to contribute critical dollars to supplement existing funds for purchase of Sickle Point.

Time is of the essence. A formal purchase offer must be made soon.

From my biologist experiences in both Ontario and British Columbia, given this fortuitous purchase opportunity, I believe that if the ecological values of Sickle Point are avoidably lost to residential development, future historians will not remember our generation kindly, especially those decision-makers that played a role in that loss.

If possible, I also request that there be an immediate stay on any development of Sickle Point under the Environment and Land Use Act, to protect this last example of a rare and important habitat while purchase negotiations are in progress.

If you require further information please contact the Save Sickle Point Committee savesicklepoint@gmail.com

Sincerely,



Robert (Bob) Lincoln

Cc: Hon. John Horgan, Premier Premier@gov.bc.ca
Cc: Hon. Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Minister.Transportation@gov.bc.ca
Cc: Hon. George Heyman, Minister Environment and Climate Change ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca
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