



November 30, 2023

Mark Pendergraft, Chair
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
101 Martin Street
Penticton BC V2A 5J9

Reference: 321077
Your File: 0400.20

Dear Chair Pendergraft:

Re: Alternate Route in the South Okanagan

Thank you for your letter of September 15, 2023, requesting the ministry consider developing an alternate route to Highway 97 in the South Okanagan Valley.

I know the recent closures of Highway 97 due to the rockslide and landslide near Summerland have been extremely challenging for residents, businesses and travellers in the South Okanagan Valley. Ministry staff will be reviewing the Highway 97 corridor and the existing detour and alternative routes in the area to identify opportunities to increase the reliability and resiliency of our regional road network. If you have any questions about this work, please reach out to District Manager Erik Lachmuth at 236 766-7194 or at Erik.Lachmuth@gov.bc.ca, as he would be pleased to help you.

Across the province, the ministry is working hard to ensure our highway network is resilient and reliable, both now and in the future. In 2022/23, the provincial government invested approximately \$560 million in bridge, highway and sideroad improvements, with \$345 million over 10 years committed to mitigating the impacts of climate change. This program will target vulnerable infrastructure in priority areas to better withstand devastating floods, slides and wildfires.

As we invest in our highway network, my ministry is using design standards that require additional efforts to ensure our infrastructure can withstand future severe climate-related weather events.

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We know that the risks to communities and to our infrastructure are changing with the climate. You can be sure that we will continue to work to ensure we can keep communities safe and connected.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Fleming". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rob" being more prominent than the last name "Fleming".

Rob Fleming
Minister

September 15, 2023

The Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure
PO Box 9055 Prov Stn Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Minister.MOTI@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Fleming:

RE: Secondary Route in the South Okanagan Valley

At the September 7, 2023, meeting of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, the Board of Directors discussed the need for a permanent secondary route for the South Okanagan-Kelowna corridor.

Currently, Hwy 97 is the only permanent route for residents travelling between the South Okanagan and Kelowna. When the highway is closed for any length of time due to landslide or wildfire, the alternate highway routes, being Hwy 5A or Hwy 33, add as much as three hours traveling time. Forest service roads, when opened for temporary public use, are not a feasible option for many drivers and their passenger vehicles.

Many residents travel frequently, if not daily, between Kelowna and the South Okanagan. Lengthy highway closures impact health care workers' ability to cover their shifts, cancer patients attending their treatments, and students attending their post-secondary classes. The economies of the two centres are impacted when employees cannot make it to work and when customers won't attempt the lengthy detoured route.

With both landslides and wildfires becoming recurring events impacting the travelling public using Hwy 97, the Board of Directors respectfully requests that consideration be given to the construction of a permanent secondary route in the South Okanagan-Kelowna corridor.

Sincerely,



Mark Pendergraft
Board Chair