



Parks Canada  
Parcs Canada  
Gatineau, Quebec  
K1A 0M5

February 27, 2008

Mr. Jan Rustad  
Base Manager  
Canadian Helicopters  
3130 Airport Road  
Penticton BC V2A 8X1

Dear Mr. Rustad:

**RE: School of Advanced Flight Training and National Park Reserve Feasibility Study, South Okanagan – Lower Similkameen**

During the community forums held in November 2007, I understand that you voiced several questions concerning the national park reserve proposal. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify Parks Canada's position with respect to the flight training school, given the Agency's policy and legislative framework, should a national park reserve be established in the future.

Your concerns, as I understand them, relate to the proposed environmental assessment of the flight training operation, and whether there would be an appeal process if flight-training activities were affected as a result. You also inquired as to whether our decision making process would take into account the positive social and economic impacts of Canadian Helicopter's flight training program.

I would like to reiterate the assurances of my letter of May 26, 2006 where I stated that Parks Canada will accommodate the flight training school activities, under permit, subject to an environmental assessment and an agreement outlining the management of the activity. This reflects our understanding of the current operation, including the fact that no ground-based support facilities would be used within the proposed park.

The current permit, issued by BC Ministry of Environment, includes a number of terms and conditions designed to minimize environmental impacts, and these terms and conditions will be reviewed as part of the environmental assessment. The environmental assessment will help to inform the terms and conditions of the new permit; it will not change Parks Canada's decision to accommodate Canadian Helicopter's flight training school. It is also important to understand that the environmental assessment would be conducted at the strategic level, and not formally registered under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

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In my previous letter, I referred to the need to negotiate a management agreement that would establish terms and conditions for the flight training activity for the mutual benefit of both parties. One objective of the management framework would be to establish a full understanding of our respective needs and appropriate terms and conditions for the operation. The negotiations would be undertaken with the intent of addressing your requirements for a safe and viable operation, and Park Canada's legal and policy requirements with respect to environmental, visitor and park management considerations.

With respect to your question concerning an appeal process, there is no formal appeal process under the environmental assessment process. However, several informal avenues would be available to you, including negotiation and/or mediation with Parks Canada's Director-General or Chief Executive Officer.

Regarding your question about economic impacts, the independent consulting firm hired by Parks Canada to prepare a socio-economic assessment of the park proposal is undertaking a detailed review of the direct and indirect economic benefits generated by the flight training operations, as well as that of other tenured commercial activities. We appreciate your ongoing cooperation with the consultants to assist them in making an accurate evaluation. It is my expectation that the positive socio-economic impacts of the flight school will be considered as part of the environmental assessment as well.

In closing, I wish to thank you for your continued involvement in the feasibility study. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further clarification.

Sincerely,



Doug Stewart  
Director General  
National Parks

C.c.: Joan Hesketh, DM, BC Ministry of Environment  
Mike Lambert, DM, BC Integrated Land Management  
Jake Kimberley, Mayor of Penticton  
Alex Atamenenko, MP  
Stockwell Day, MP