



ALBERTA  
SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Minister  
MLA, Grande Prairie - Smoky

AR25046

May 19, 2010

Mr. Gordon Petersen  
P.O. Box 2668  
Pincher Creek, AB T0K 1W0

Dear Mr. Petersen:

Thank you for your May 4, 2010 email regarding the proposed timber harvesting in the Castle Special Management Area. I welcome the opportunity to provide the following information.

The predominant tree species in the Castle area is the lodgepole pine and these trees have adapted to routine renewal. Historically, this renewal has occurred through wildfires. With no major wildfires since the early 1900s, large blocks of old trees now dominate the southwestern forests and are vulnerable to extreme fire and insect attacks. Timber harvesting is a mechanism that not only achieves economic benefits, but also acts as a form of forest renewal.

Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas legislation does not include a "Special Places" designation for any form of park or protected area. The Special Places initiative was a program where citizens or groups could nominate areas for consideration for possible protection. The local community advisory group did nominate the Castle area; however, they indicated that they did not want a park designation. This preference was achieved through the *Forests Act* and the creation of the Castle Special Management Area.

The local committee supported sustainable multiple use of the area and recommended the management of the area follow the guidelines of an updated Castle Integrated Resource Management Plan. The committee also asked the government to provide access restrictions under legislation. The government accepted the committee's report and recommendations for implementation in March 1998, and established the area as a Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ), primarily to restrict motorized recreational vehicles. The FLUZ designation does not restrict industrial uses such as timber harvesting.

.../2

404 Legislature Building 10800 - 97 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6 Canada  
Telephone 780-415-4815 Fax 780-415-4818

Constituency Office #105, 9804 - 100 Avenue, Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 0T8 Canada  
Tel 780-513-1233 Fax 780-513-1247  
Web Address: melknightmla.com

Printed on recycled paper

Page 2

In 2007, Sustainable Resource Development deferred approval of the C5 forest management plan pending the completion of the Land-use Framework regional plans. Until a new land management plan is complete, timber harvesting will proceed under the terms of the former forest management plan.

The Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring a healthy environment for current and future generations. Within the Land-use Framework, development of regional plans will help achieve a balance between responsible economic development, environmental sustainability and recreational opportunities. Current land use plans permit timber harvesting and other industrial activities in the area. Within the proposed regional plans, the government will continue to make decisions regarding appropriate uses of particular areas by considering combined impacts of development on the environment.

Spray Lake Sawmills has referred to the possible harvest in this area since 2006, as part of the standard timber harvest planning process. For direct input into the Spray Lake Sawmill's annual plan, I recommend you participate in the company's annual open house. Information about this year's open house is available on the company website at [www.spraylakesawmills.com](http://www.spraylakesawmills.com).

I appreciate your taking the time to bring your concerns to my attention.

Sincerely,

Mel R. Knight  
Minister

cc: Evan Berger, MLA  
Livingstone-Macleod