Dear Dr. Cornelis Visser:

Thank you for your letter of January 16, 2020, to Minister Donaldson regarding your support for the Valhalla Wilderness Society’s proposal to create a Class A Provincial Park near Revelstoke, British Columbia. I have been asked to respond and apologize for the delay.

BC has been a leader in Canada for creating new parks through publicly involved processes, such as the expansion of the protected areas system to meet the 12 percent goal in the late 1990s and the more recent goal of 17 percent protected lands and inland waters by 2020. BC was the first jurisdiction to achieve and surpass this recent target with approximately 20 percent of the land base currently meeting the protection criteria of parks, protected areas, and other effective area-based conservation management designations.

The decision to establish a new or expanded provincial park is part of a broader land use decision-making process. Difficult decisions between economic, environmental, social, and cultural values require comprehensive processes involving Indigenous governments, local governments, industry, non-governmental organizations, stakeholders, and the public. As such, new programs such as modernized land use planning and collaborative stewardship with First Nations to ensure that the provincial government builds inclusive decision-making processes that involve First Nations and the public.

BC does not have the resources to undertake land use planning in all areas of the province. Should land use planning be undertaken in this area, we will include your input regarding the values of these lands.

It is important to note that approximately 3,000 hectares of this area are protected as ungulate winter range through the Government Action Regulation under the Forests and Range Practices Act, which contains special restrictions for industrial and commercial recreational activities to protect mountain caribou habitat. In addition, much of the area you describe is now within a Section 17 reserve under the Land Act, which prevents the issuance of any new recreation tenures to protect mountain caribou habitat. Furthermore, approximately 800 hectares of this area are within non-legal Old Growth Management Areas.

Again, thank you for writing.

Yours truly,

Tom Ethier
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
    Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy