July 3, 2020

Via Email Honourable Terry Beech
MP for Burnaby-Seymour

Re: Bill C-17 and CEWS

BC Nature encourages you to support Bill C-17, which we understand will be considered by the House of Parliament on July 8th. BC Nature (Federation of British Columbia Naturalists) is a non-profit, registered charity, that represents 52 natural history clubs throughout BC and with more than 6,000 members.

We are a small non-profit with one paid office manager. We qualify for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) on all accounts as we have had a 50% revenue drop compared with last year for March, April, May and now June. However, we are a victim of a technicality: our payroll - like approximately 60 other Provincial Sport Organisations in BC - is processed through Sport BC, a non-profit sport federation, who handle it on our behalf. This means that our statutory remittances are made with Sport BC’s payroll account with the CRA and we do not have our own RP account which is a prerequisite of the current CEWS legislation. As an unintended consequence, we are currently disqualified from accessing CEWS. This arrangement came about some forty years ago when we first hired an office staff person and at that time we rented space within Sport BC building and so it was a good arrangement to have Sport BC handle our payroll, including benefits. This arrangement has worked well for BC Nature over the decades and we were not aware of the importance of our having our own RP account.

Bill C-17 seeks to address this and includes amendments to the definition of a Qualifying Entity for the CEWS program which will address the RP account issue and allow us to access the subsidy program. If this bill does not pass, it will have a potentially devastating impact on us.

As clearly stated, the purpose of the Federal government’s $73-billion wage subsidy program is for employers to keep employees on payroll during COVID-19 and to reduce employees’ reliance on the Employment Insurance regime. Non-profit organizations and amateur athletic organizations are listed as eligible applicants and we would like the opportunity to ensure that our employee is retained to help support BC’s recovery. Without CEWS, we face an uncertain future and will likely have to greatly curtail our services and programs.

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We need your support for Bill C-17 so we can benefit from CEWS like so many others and can continue our work to build healthy communities involved with nature across British Columbia.

Yours truly,

Harry Crosby
President, BC Nature

Cc
Honourable: MP Jonathan Wilkinson
Honourable MP Jagmeet Singh Dhaliwal
The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P. Prime Minister of Canada
Honourable MP Andrew Scheer