



Reference: 300446

JUN 06 2016

Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps
and Councillors
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps and Council:

Thank you for your letter of May 3, 2016, regarding the creation of a British Columbia (BC) Natural Lands Acquisition Fund.

BC Parks has a long history of protecting key natural, recreational and cultural features through private land acquisitions and land use planning processes. In the last 10 years, BC Parks has added over 2 million hectares of land to the provincial protected areas system. Most of these lands have come from land use planning processes; however, BC Parks has acquired significant parcels through private land acquisitions, including:

- A commitment of \$1 million to assume ownership of several of the 26 conservation properties transferred from The Land Conservancy of British Columbia to the Nature Conservancy of Canada;
- 395 hectares of unique and sensitive ecosystems on Quadra Island;
- Approximately 500 hectares of Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem on Denman Island;
- 109 hectares of the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone at Bodega Ridge Park on Galiano Island;
- Key habitat for species at risk at Skaha Bluffs Provincial Park; and
- The Valhalla Mile acquisition along the west side of Slocan Lake in the Kootenays, resulting in 63 hectares of land being added to the existing Valhalla Provincial Park.

Over the last number of years, BC Parks has been able to bring more innovative approaches to potential land acquisition projects. These approaches include using:

- Forest carbon offsets;
- Density transfers that reduce land parcel values by transferring development opportunities to other lands;
- Eco-gifting incentives in cooperation with the federal government; and
- Land exchanges, where feasible, to trade lands rather than purchase lands.

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BC Parks will continue to consider key private land acquisitions based on a set of criteria that include conservation and recreation values and park operations. However, at this time, the Province is not in a position to consider the creation of an acquisition fund as you suggest.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Polak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" and last name "Polak" clearly distinguishable.

Mary Polak
Minister