

Open Letter to the Honourable Katrine Conroy
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

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Dear Minister Conroy,

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. We hope you will usher in considerable change from the former destructive practices of that Ministry. We also thank you for your willingness to "close the loopholes" that allowed the trapping of wolves on Vancouver Island. New legislation is definitely needed, and we appreciate your prompt recognition of this.

However, your statement quoted in the *Times Colonist*, that you will "be working with the B.C. Wildlife Federation and BC Trappers Association to change the regulations", has caused serious consternation across the environmental movement, which represents thousands of British Columbians. Surely your Ministry would not select only two interest groups for consultation — and groups that have a vested interest in killing wolves at that.

For some time the BC Government has been gravitating towards a stance that recognizes only hunters, trappers and First Nations as having a valid interest in the province's wildlife. Past administrations have even considered giving control of BC wildlife management to private interests dominated by hunter, trapper and guide outfitter groups. This has been infuriating to the many BC residents who aren't hunters or trappers, but who are aware of the crucial role that apex predators have in maintaining ecosystem health in BC. *BC's wildlife belongs to ALL British Columbians.*

The *Globe & Mail* also quoted you as saying, in regards to the hunting and trapping of wolves: "they breed like rabbits. There are no conservation concerns." Please reconsider this common fallacy that has long been promoted by hunters, trappers, and some wildlife managers who have failed to take note of the science of ecology. Doesn't "no conservation concerns" infer that we can kill as many wolves as we want because their breeding habits make it difficult to wipe them out? And if there are no conservation concerns, then is there no need to include the opinions of environmental groups, wildlife viewing businesses, and unaffiliated citizens who value our wildlife alive?

To the contrary, we assure you that wolves have been wiped out over a vast area of the United States. They were nearly wiped out historically in parts of southern Canada from early trapping, strychnine poisoning and persecution. But conservation concern for wolves must also include the crucial role that wolves play in maintaining the balance of species in an ecosystem. Simply reducing wolf populations can have very negative ripple effects in ecosystems that can extend to wiping out other species.

Your desire to "close the loopholes" is clear. But it is notorious that hunters, trappers, and their organizations, lobby constantly to have large carnivores regularly killed in order to increase ungulate populations, for no other reason than to make it easier for humans to hunt them. That is not science, and it is detrimental to biodiversity, which healthy wolf populations promote. Consulting only their organizations could introduce serious bias into the new rules that you propose to put in place. That would be a betrayal of the public trust vested in a government that is supposed to be committed to fairness to all.

We therefore request that the environmental groups, independent conservationists, independent scientists and non-consumptive wildlife viewing tourism businesses have standing equal to hunting and trapping interests in this matter. Please bring your attention and the powers of your office to a more balanced review of this urgent issue.

Sincerely,
28 Signators

cc: Premier John Horgan
Hon. Nathan Cullen, Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resources

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