

Delivered via email
Roly.russell.MLA@leg.bc.ca



August 16, 2022

Roly Russell, MLA
PO Box 1592
Grand Forks, BC
V0H 1H0

Dear Mr. Roly Russell, MLA,

We have just been advised of your visit to Tulameen on August 17, 2022 however due to the short notice, will not be able to attend therefore sending our questions and concerns to you via this letter so they can be addressed at the meeting.

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Foundation (TOTF) was established in 2019 with a mandate to create, preserve, and enhance recreational trails, with particular focus on advancement of regional rail trail corridors.

The recent damages to the Kettle Valley Rail Trail (Flood of Nov 2021) have brought to light the need for trail advocacy as the KVR trail is of utmost importance to the communities of Tulameen and Coalmont, as well as other communities in the region where the trail was hardest hit by the flood.

Recognizing that the KVR route between Tulameen and Coalmont is a highly travelled section of trail facilitating transportation, recreation, and tourism, being the only trail corridor access to popular recreation areas and attractions such as Granite Creek and Lodestone, we are engaging with local community and government to ensure this section of trail is viewed as a high priority for repairs.

This has prompted TOTF to formally establish the "KVR Trail Preservation Alliance" (registered with BC Registry Aug 12, 2022) with over 600 members signed up on manual sheets in the first week, and more coming in daily, we anticipate a high volume of registration once we open online registration, which we are currently working on.

As the Development Manager for TOTF my duties include sourcing funding opportunities and as such came across the Infrastructure Canada Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) and sent inquiry on May 27, 2022 to Assistant Deputy Minister Jim Standen, responsible for oversight of RSTBC, to see if the province had any plans to apply to this fund or any other fund for KVR repairs (see attached 20220527 TOTF Letter to ADM Standen RE: KVR Repairs).

Further to Assistant Deputy Minister Jim Standen's reply of June 17, 2022, advising "while I recognize the great importance of the KVR to communities, at this time government has not decided if the trail will be repaired" (see attached 20220617 Letter from ADM Standen) it is imperative that government is made aware that this section of trail not only has great importance directly related to the economic impact it has on the local communities, but also of great importance in ensuring public safety to facilitate the movement of tourists and recreationists in the region.

Our discussions with the regional district, local communities, and first responders have made it abundantly clear that the section of trail that runs through Coalmont and Tulameen, and connects the two communities, needs to be recognized as high priority for repairs to ensure public safety as evidenced by the letters of concern from RCMP Area Commander Sgt Hughes and Tulameen & District Fire Chief Woodford (see attached letters of concern).

The KVR is a most important economic driver for the region, it is what connects the communities and attracts visitors, with recreation opportunities being a key attraction, property values and vacation rentals have seen unprecedented growth over the past several years creating a significantly increased tax base for the region, especially in the Tulameen area, however with the flood damage disconnecting the trail, it is also disconnecting the communities from the highly coveted trails and attractions that make the area desirable, creating a negative impact on the economy that will have devastating trickle down effect.

While we are hopeful that the KVR will once again be a continuous route, connecting communities and visitors throughout the region, we recognize that there is extensive damage in several areas, prompting the need to prioritize critical infrastructure that has the greatest impact on public safety and the local economies that benefit from the trail therefore we urge you to support the recovery and repair of this critical section of trail, including the trestle at the main beach on Otter Lake in Tulameen.

There is currently another Infrastructure Canada federal grant fund the “Natural Infrastructure Fund (NIF)” with open intake that supports natural infrastructure projects involving the creation, expansion, restoration, improvement or enhancement of natural or hybrid infrastructure that is primarily for public benefit, providing benefits to communities including increasing climate change resilience, with eligible projects including construction or restoration of naturalized water retention or detention systems, and naturalized water diversion.

Considering the KVR trail provides natural flood protection for a many homes and properties throughout the valley it would seem that a KVR project would meet the goals and objectives of the NIF fund to address infrastructure failures from natural hazards and extreme weather events.

We are pleased to see continued federal grant funding opportunities available however based on the response from ADM Standen, it appears the provincial government is not inclined to apply for funding for KVR repairs, so we would like to inquire, if there is funding opportunities available, why the province is choosing not to apply for funding at this time, and ask for your support in requesting that government takes action to secure the funding needed to repair the KVR.

In reading the Parliamentary Secretary for Rural and Regional Development mandate letter from Premier Horgan, we are pleased to see that it includes a mandate to “provide the regional perspective to the work of the Ministry with a focus on implementing supports for rural, remote and First Nations communities when needed” as this is definitely a time that these rural communities need support.

It is also extremely fortunate that not only are you the Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development, you are also the MLA for the Boundary, South Okanagan, and Similkameen region that the KVR trail travels through, with advocacy listed in your services “to bring the

voices of Boundary-Similkameen to the legislature on the policy issues that affect our lives and our communities” therefore we look forward to working with you and calling upon your expertise and experience gained in leading the response in the Grand Forks region that was hit hard by flooding in 2018 establishing a new model of community-led disaster recovery.

In closing, we ask that you please support the recovery and repair of the Kettle Valley Rail Trail and the communities affected by the 2021 flood, to bring the collective voice forward on behalf of the communities and its constituents in support of public safety and rural development.

Kind regards,

Kim Smith

cc President, Tulameen Community Club
Sgt Hughes, RCMP Area Commander
Fire Chief Woodford, Tulameen & District Fire Dept
KVR Trail Preservation Alliance Members

Attachments

20220527 TOTF Letter to ADM Standen RE KVR Repairs
20220617 Letter from ADM Standen
20220711 Letter from Sgt Hughes
20220804 Letter from Fire Chief Woodford

Kim Smith
Development Manager

Thompson Okanagan Tourism Foundation
A subsidiary of the [Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association \(TOTA\)](#)

Office: 2280D Leckie Road, Kelowna, BC, V1X 6G6
Mailing Address: 101-1865 Dilworth Drive, Suite #329, Kelowna, BC V1Y 9T1

(778) 721-5519 | Kim@TOTABC.com

[TOTFBC.com](#) | [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) | [News.TOTABC.org](#)

[ThompsonOkanagan.com](#) | [f](#) [t](#) [ig](#) [yt](#)
[BCRailTrails.ca](#)

