

Tips for Writing a Letter to a Public Official

Government officials receive numerous messages by letter and e-mail each week. A poorly written letter may cause offence, confuse the issue, or simply be ignored. The following tips are based on an article entitled "How to write a letter to your MP" by Sandy McMurray, a freelance writer in Toronto. Her advice is transferrable to writing an MLA, or any public official.

- Brief is Better – Keep to one side of a page
- Clarity is key – State clearly in the first sentence the purpose of your letter.
- **Get personal** - Use examples to support your point; this makes your letter more memorable.
- You get points for style – Handwritten letters or those signed by hand seem to be more effective than form letters and e-mail. If you go with e-mail, put the subject in the subject line.
- If you are from that MLA's constituency, include that in the letter.
- A male MLA should be addressed as "Mr. <name>, MLA", female as "Ms. <name>, MLA", and a Minister as "The Honourable <name>".
- **Ask for a response** – If you feel confident you know what the response should be then request a specific action. Otherwise ask what the recipient plans to do to address your concerns. Close with "I look forward to your response."
- Sign your name and include your return address.
- If you receive a response to your letter, write to say thank you!

The following summary of the issues presented at the February 28, 2015 APOA Public Forum may assist you in determining the subject matter of your communication with public officials.

There has been too much harvesting in too short a time. This is impacting the tourism and recreation values of the Apex – Nickel Plate area. There has been insufficient time for regrowth between harvesting of adjacent or nearly adjacent cut blocks. The cumulative impact is that Nickel Plate Nordic Center, Nickel Plate Lake, Okanagan Vista Trail System, and Apex Village are all being encroached upon by increasingly large contiguous clear cuts.

Planned harvest volumes by the multiple companies harvesting in this area appear to maintain or even accelerate the annual rate-of-cut in this area into the future. This has and will continue to result in:

- Significant degradation to the visual quality of this important tourism area.
- Increased opportunities for motorized vehicle access without adequate plans to manage the changing recreation mix of motorized and non-motorized users.
- Potential expansion and enhancement of recreation in the area is being restricted for several generations of recreation users.

In October 2013 the APOA submitted comments on the Skul'qalt Forestry FSP. APOA explicitly stated that local stakeholders should be consulted before Skul'qalt undertakes harvesting in this designated Intensive Recreation Area. This crucial consultation was bypassed yet MFLNRO (the government forestry department) issued Skul'qalt cut permits for 40,000 M³ in this area. A separate but related concern is there are referenced (planned) cut blocks that either fully or partially overlap the Nickel Plate Nordic Center trail system. These blocks are Sn'pink'tn Forestry (CP4-1, APE-58) and Weyerhaeuser (APE-27, 34, 48). These issues have raised local stakeholder concerns about relying on the current Professional Reliance Model when harvesting is being done in a recreation area. It also calls into doubt whether MFLNRO is willing or able to prevent inappropriate harvesting practices in recreation areas.

All this harvesting has (mainly) been compliant with current regulation and accepted industry practices. This has lead the APOA Forestry Advisory Committee to conclude that changes in regulation and/or present forest industry practices are required to protect recreation areas from degradation. We believe this has become an issue that requires a political and regulatory solution.