

March 20, 2017

RE: Castle Park Draft Management Plan

The Crowsnest Pass Chamber of Commerce board recently met to discuss the ramifications of the new Castle Park. The Chamber's focus is supporting businesses and the local economy, and we believe that there are several ways Castle Park can either help or hinder our community. We recognize that there is a great deal of anxiety regarding the loss of recreational opportunities, however, this is a social issue that is better addressed by special interest groups that represent those activities.

In the last month, representatives of the Chamber met with staff from Alberta Environment and Parks, as well as Crowsnest Pass Municipal Council to discuss the concerns of our community. Our board has identified three main issues that we feel need to be addressed.

### **1. Access to Castle Park**

In order to gain economic benefit, Crowsnest Pass needs to be known as a northern gateway to the new park. We believe that the Alberta Government needs to collaborate with local government and stakeholders on several initiatives:

- Road improvements to Adanac and Sartoris (Lyons Creek) Road. These the only two access routes from Crowsnest Pass into the area, and without better access the park will have little economic benefit to our community.
- The Alberta Government must create features such as campgrounds, trailheads, points of interest, and other services in the north end of the park that are easily accessible from our community.
- Signs and way finding are required to direct users to the park using Crowsnest Pass as the service centre. Traffic mitigation in affected neighbourhoods must be considered.
- Mapping and access to route-finding that is available both online and in print.
- A tourism and marketing campaign to promote Crowsnest Pass alongside the new park.

### **2. A recreation management plan for Crowsnest Pass area**

It has been stated a number of times that Castle area users will be able to random camp and ATV in other areas. What has not been discussed is how that will be managed. As Crowsnest Pass is likely to absorb a great number of these recreational enthusiasts, it is critical to have a recreation management plan for our area. It is our understanding that the Alberta Government intends to create recreation management plans for Porcupine Hills, Livingstone, then Crowsnest; we believe that the Crowsnest plan needs to be moved ahead as we are the area with the highest pressure. Consider the following:

- Regional staging areas are often reaching capacity.
- Despite the diligent and ongoing efforts of local groups, our trail system is slowly degrading. As we are a community of limited resources, we will not be able to keep up with increasing usage, and we need assistance from the Alberta Government to ensure that both trails and staging areas are well maintained.
- The Alberta Government needs to ensure that there are adequate facilities, such as random camping areas, and that there is the ability to maintain these sites.

- Increased usage of staging areas and regional trails can be an economic benefit if we receive assistance from the Alberta Government in maintaining these areas.
- This is **not** suggesting that the Alberta Government should shut out ATViing or any other types of users; we simply need to be sure that Crowsnest Pass does not bear the full burden of upkeep.
- We believe that there needs to be a locally-based enforcement component to achieve the goals of a recreation management plan. Indeed, many of the issues seen in the Castle area appear to come from a lack of enforcement.

### **3. Clarification as to how commercial tourism and events will be affected**

Currently there is very little information in the Draft Management Plan regarding commercial recreation and there is a great deal of anxiety with some business owners as to how this park will affect their operations. In some cases these companies are related to ATV tourism and guiding, and they are concerned that they will lose a large portion of their income. There are also events and tourism operators that currently access portions of the new park who are unsure of how to proceed. Most tourism-related businesses are already planning well into summer, and the uncertainty of what happens next is limiting their ability to solidify both plans and budgets. To address these concerns:

- We believe the Alberta Government needs to directly engage with businesses that are identified as being affected by the new park.
- Once identified, the Alberta Government needs to work with these businesses to ensure their operations remain viable during the transition.
- The Alberta Government should maintain a status-quo approach to access and permits for these businesses for a minimum of one year.

The Chamber of Commerce board looks forward working with our local and provincial government counterparts as we advocate on behalf of local businesses. If business owners do have comments or concerns, we would like to hear from you, so please contact our office at: [office@crowsnestpasschamber.ca](mailto:office@crowsnestpasschamber.ca).

Kindest regards,

**Brian Gallant**  
President  
Crowsnest Pass Chamber of Commerce