

January 5, 2021

Hon. Jason Nixon, Minister, Environment & Parks, House Leader
Office of the Minister
323 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Ave
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

RE: Alberta's Crown Land Vision

Dear Minister Nixon:

The Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA) is pleased to have this opportunity to comment on Alberta's proposed Crown Land Vision document. We are committed to the principle of sustainable land management where policy supports the mutually desirable aims of recreation, economic use and conservation.

TIAA believes improvements to land management policies that support outdoor recreation is foundational to supporting the goal of becoming a \$20B tourism industry by 2030. In this context, we congratulate the province on its acknowledgement of the importance of parks protection and enjoyment to Albertans through the recent announcement which assures that the parks and public recreation area sites that had been scheduled for delisting as part of the Budget 2020 optimization will retain their current designations and associated safeguards.

The pandemic has created unprecedented demand for domestic tourism and outdoor recreation as people seek the restorative benefits that come from being outside, and in nature. Investing in the enhancement of existing or creation of new destination parks, signature trails and adventure tourism opportunities on Public Lands and in Parks and their adjacent communities is an opportunity to greatly increase the yield from domestic travel. These investments will also be highly desirable with long-haul international markets (when borders re-open) and will further contribute to the competitiveness of Alberta, as a whole.

Nevertheless, if Alberta is serious about attracting new and sustainable tourism development on crown lands and streamlining the application process to be more responsive to investor expectations, the legislative framework must be modernized, on a priority basis, to signal that the province is focussed on growing a sustainable, tourism and outdoor recreation economy.

To support current and future tourism and outdoor recreation economy opportunities, it is important that legislation enshrine an expectation that any land provided for tourism growth will be carefully managed with other land uses to avoid any deleterious effects to tourism values (eg. ensuring protections for tourism features, settings and scenery).

There have simply been too many instances where investment capital has left Alberta in favour of neighbouring provinces that are more intent on encouraging new tourism development as part of their overall economic strategy. The limited focus and investment in outdoor recreation infrastructure on public lands outside of parks continues to result in significant unmet potential of the outdoor recreation economy. Strategic public sector investment in trails, staging areas etc. is essential to attracting further private sector investment and unlocking the true potential of Alberta's outdoor recreation economy on public lands.

over...

TIAA tenders the following recommendations in support of Alberta's Crown Land Vision:

- Ensure that high value and high potential tourism and outdoor recreation areas on public lands are identified and that steps are taken to ensure their value and potential are maintained.
- Modernize all Alberta Parks and relevant public lands legislation, regulations and policies to:
 - support and enable world class sustainable nature-based, adventure and indigenous tourism development
 - remove unnecessary barriers and impediments to tourism development
 - provide a clear, simple, efficient and timely approvals process that builds investor confidence and certainty and enhances the investment appeal of these lands.
- Immediately undertake a market-driven assessment of Public Lands and Alberta Parks to identify at least 10 sites that are suitable for the development of export ready sustainable nature-based, adventure and indigenous tourism experiences.
- Follow through with the UCP election platform commitment to introduce an Alberta Trails Act and ensure that the legislation supports the development, enhancement and maintenance of sustainable trails and signature trails that contribute to community, economic and environmental well-being. Government support for these objectives should be found through dedicated funding as well as the potential introduction of user fees, as was recently illustrated through the government's partnership with Nordiq Alberta; and, following the many examples that exist in neighbouring British Columbia.
- Increase and strategically prioritize Alberta Parks' capital funding to develop, expand or modernize travel motivating visitor infrastructure and experiences in Alberta's destination parks and recreation areas within parks and on public lands. Capital investments should be prioritized to areas identified as new priority destination regions.
- Ensure that the proposed Alberta Infrastructure Act provides a dedicated, coordinated and strategic funding stream for investment in both visitor supporting and demand driving tourism and outdoor recreation infrastructure in priority destination regions.

TIAA believes improvements to our public lands policies that support outdoor recreation will be foundational to supporting the goal of becoming a \$20B tourism industry by 2030. In the context of crown land management, this is why the overarching vision needs to purposefully support the growth and development of a strong outdoor recreation economy – not just focus on managing outdoor recreation as a secondary land use, which appears to be the current focus.

We look forward to working with Alberta Environment & Parks and related ministries to achieve this objective.

Sincerely,



Darren Reeder
Board Advisor