



British Columbia Snowmobile Federation

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February 16, 2024

The Honourable Bruce Ralston, MLA
Minister of Forests
Room 138 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Via email: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Snowmobile Access in the Renshaw Snowmobile Area

Dear Minister,

As a dedicated representative of the BC Snowmobile Federation, which comprises 59 volunteer-led Snowmobile Clubs across the Province, I am compelled to highlight the substantial positive economic influence that snowmobiling contributes to our winter rural economy. Having had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the significant role this recreational activity plays in supporting rural local businesses and communities, I would like to emphasize the findings of the BCSF's Economic Impact Study completed in 2018, which underscored a staggering \$299 million economic impact, sustaining nearly 4300 jobs in BC from our four month season.

Snowmobiling not only attracts tourists and outdoor enthusiasts to our beautiful wilderness areas but also sustains many small businesses, including accommodation providers, restaurants, equipment rental shops, and gas stations, especially in remote regions where alternative economic opportunities are limited.

However, despite the clear economic advantages, we are encountering obstacles that jeopardize the accessibility of our snowmobiling areas, notably concerning the upkeep of Forest Service Roads and critical infrastructure like bridges. A recent illustration of this challenge is the abrupt closure of access to the Renshaw snowmobile area near McBride during the middle of the season due to the zero rating of a bridge. This closure has effectively shut down the trail without any immediate plan or secured investment for bridge replacement, leaving the snowmobile community without access.

The closure of this access point not only disrupts the recreational activities of enthusiasts but also poses a severe economic threat to the local community of McBride. With the loss of the primary snowmobile area in McBride, the Renshaw, businesses in McBride reliant on snowmobiling tourism will undoubtedly suffer, potentially leading to job losses and decreased revenue for the town. The Village of McBride is reporting a 70% decrease in traffic since the trail closed on January 22, 2024.

Community | Integrity | Engagement | Leadership

MISSION STATEMENT "The British Columbia Snowmobile Federation is dedicated to provide strong leadership and support to member clubs to establish, maintain and protect quality opportunities for organized snowmobiling in British Columbia and to promote the safe and environmentally responsible use of these opportunities."

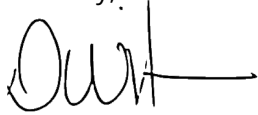
While the loss this season is significant the long term effects if we are not able to replace the infrastructure is far reaching.

I urge you to prioritize the immediate restoration of access to the Renshaw snowmobile area and to develop a comprehensive plan for the maintenance of Forest Service Roads and bridges essential for snowmobiling access across the province. Furthermore, I seek your commitment to acknowledging the invaluable contributions of our volunteer clubs in trail creation and maintenance. This entails ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to support and sustain the essential infrastructure components required to the roads used to access our areas.

By safeguarding access to our snowmobiling areas, we can not only preserve a beloved winter recreational activity but also sustain the economic well-being of rural communities throughout British Columbia.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your swift action and support on behalf of the snowmobiling community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Wilson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Donegal Wilson
Executive Director

Cc:

Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Amandeep Singh, MLA Parliamentary Secretary for Environment aman.singh.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Shirley Bond, MLA Prince George-Valemount shirley.bond.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Mayor Gene Runtz, Mayor of the Village of McBride mayor@mcbride.ca