



Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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Garibaldi at Squamish

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The Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC (FMCBC) sends this letter in response to Addendum #1 to the proponent's Resort Master Plan. The FMCBC represents the interests of over twenty non-motorized outdoor recreation clubs and some 4,000 members in British Columbia, the majority of which are in the Lower Mainland. Most of the activities that our members pursue, such as hiking, backpacking, mountaineering, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, take place in subalpine and alpine areas.

This letter addresses two documents within Addendum 1 to the Garibaldi at Squamish Master Plan:

1. Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Terms of Reference, and
2. Recreation Sites and Trails Management Plan

1. Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Terms of Reference

In previous Open Houses and public comment periods for the proposed GAS resort, the FMCBC has repeatedly expressed concerns that the resort's impact on existing recreational use is poorly or not at all addressed in the application. Therefore we welcome that impacts on current recreation use are included in the socio-economic impact assessment.

However, the Terms of Reference for the socio-economic impact assessment should be changed to include input from recreational groups in the Sea-to-Sky corridor. The document currently states that the project consultant will clarify the terms of reference, discuss issues, etc. with the District of Squamish. The project review and advisory committee will consist of other levels of government and the resort proponent. Outdoor recreation clubs and associations, including the FMCBC, need to be consulted on the terms of reference of the study and the issues in order to provide an accurate assessment of current recreational use and the impact of the proposed resort. Little or no government data exists on public recreational use of the area, but clubs have much of that information and would like to share it.

Changing the recreational use at Brohm Ridge area has significant effects on the whole Sea to Sky corridor from Squamish to north of Pemberton. Recreation in the Sea to Sky corridor is addressed in the LRMP which is currently being implemented. For winter recreation an agreement was negotiated by representatives from commercial and public, motorized and non-motorized user groups as part of the Sea to Sky Backcountry Recreation Forums. In that agreement Brohm Ridge is designated as a snowmobile friendly area, while other areas have been given up by snowmobilers and designated for non-motorized recreation like backcountry skiing and snowshoeing. If this resort development proceeds, snowmobilers will be displaced from Brohm Ridge. This will cause a wave of conflicts between snowmobiling and non-motorized recreation in other parts of the Sea to Sky corridor. The impact on recreation by the proposed resort is not on Brohm Ridge alone, and the impact assessment must consider impacts of this very large development on the whole Sea to Sky area.

2. Recreation Sites and Trails Management Plan

GAS Compatibility with Current Public Use (p.22-23)

“Public snowmobiling is not a compatible activity for GAS in the area proposed for skiing, and represents a challenge for the resort master plan. Proposals to access Garibaldi Provincial Park by snowmobile need to be reviewed in future by the government. Other options to relocate away from Brohm Ridge with the establishment of a long-term tenure on Crown and appropriate facilities for riders need to be considered during the final planning and early construction period for GAS to avoid future conflicts between these 2 land uses”. (p.23)

Relocating snowmobile use from Brohm Ridge to other areas in the Sea to Sky corridor is impossible without major conflicts with non-motorized recreation and commercial recreation tenures, as explained in the previous section. Considering options for relocation away from Brohm Ridge during the final planning and early construction stages for GAS is too late. Any options need to be considered and planned before the EAO and MTCA allow GAS to proceed with the resort. Otherwise, with no available “unused” land available for snowmobiling in the Sea to Sky corridor, snowmobilers are likely to take over areas that are zoned non-motorized under the LRMP or they will intrude into Garibaldi Provincial Park.

Furthermore, we take issue with the statement that the government needs to review snowmobile access proposals to Garibaldi Provincial Park. While this would give the proponent an easy way out from displacing snowmobilers from Brohm Ridge, it is up to the government (BC Parks) to determine whether the park’s management plan needs to be updated, not the GAS proponent.

GAS Compatibility with Garibaldi Provincial Park (p.23-24)

“Some adventurers will use the resort to access the nearby peaks and some will ski or board the untracked snow but the numbers will be small and will primarily comprise local people familiar with the area. It is estimated that in ten years, 5,000 visitors will access the park from the resort each the winter, with a peak visitation of 100 daily”.

The FMCBC disagrees with the proponent’s assessment that the number of skiers and boarders seeking untracked snow in Garibaldi Provincial Park will be small and will be mainly local people. At the Whistler-Blackcomb resort, large numbers hike into Garibaldi Provincial Park every day in winter to ski and board from the ridge (Musical Bumps). Numbers have increased to the point that Whistler-Blackcomb is conducting avalanche control to the hike-accessed terrain on one of the Musical Bumps, Flute Peak. A significant and growing number of skiers and

boarders is attracted to backcountry terrain and untracked snow, and without changes to the proponent's Masterplan, large numbers will use lift access to enter the park. To reduce the environmental impact on the park and to preserve the experience of self-propelled backcountry skiers in Garibaldi Provincial Park, the FMCBC proposes to remove Lift Q and replace with hike-access. This would provide skiers and boarders who seek untracked snow with a backcountry experience, while effectively limiting impacts on the park.

3. Conclusions

- Outdoor recreation clubs and associations, including the FMCBC, need to be consulted on the terms of reference and issues of the socio-economic impact assessment study.
- The impact on recreation by the proposed GAS resort, particularly the relocation of snowmobilers, is not on the Controlled Recreation Area alone, and the impact assessment must consider impacts of on the whole Sea to Sky area.
- Plan and consult on options for relocating snowmobilers away from Brohm Ridge before the EAO and MTCA allow GAS to proceed with the resort. Otherwise, with no available “unused” land available for snowmobiling in the Sea to Sky corridor, snowmobilers are likely to take over areas that are zoned non-motorized under the LRMP or they will intrude into Garibaldi Provincial Park.
- Eliminate Lift Q and replace it hike-accessed terrain to provide skiers and boarders with untracked snow and a backcountry experience, while effectively limiting impacts on Garibaldi Provincial Park.

Sincerely,

Antje Wahl
Co-Chair, Recreation & Conservation Committee
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