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From: Mary J Gillis <contact information removed>

Sent: July 20, 2016 12:58 AM

To: EA Review / Examen EE (CEAA)

Subject: To meet your deadline July 20: Review of Canada's environmental assessment process

To those of you who keep Canada's lands and people in a sacred trust

I am encouraged that you have given us an opportunity to comment on the environmental assessment process, and to:

- * "restore robust oversight and thorough environmental assessments of areas under federal jurisdiction" ... etc.;
- * "ensure decisions are based on science, facts and evidence and serve the public interest";
- * "provide ways for Canadians to express their views, and opportunities for experts to meaningfully participate";
- * "require project advocates to choose the best technologies available to reduce environmental impact"."

I ask that you consider the following success story of the "power of the people" in securing the future of one very threatened piece of ocean-surrounded and precious land in the District of Surrey, British Columbia.

I have been actively involved in conservation and environmental issues since the 1970s when my former husband and I worked hard with many others to persuade the Municipality of Surrey, B.C. that an ecologically important and threatened piece of farmland near our home had to be saved from a proposed 70 townhouse development sitting on the Nickomekl River estuary and the Pacific Boundary Bay at Crescent Beach. A local doctor (a dedicated environmentalist) had tried to save the land around his home on "Dunsmuir Farm" by offering around 17 acres to the City of Surrey at a knockdown price so they would dedicate it as parkland. These lands sat around a muddy bay (in effect a lagoon that attracts numerous types of migrating birds) who would have been threatened by large development. This lagoon area was a smaller part of the Surrey-owned "Blackie's Spit", eventually purchased from the original owner of the reclaimed land that constituted "the Spit". This large sand spit divides the Dunsmuir estuary and bay from the ocean that runs from Crescent Beach to White Rock. Surrey initially refused to purchase the farm land from the good doctor, who (in order to keep his house and pay his taxes) ended up having to sell a parcel of his riverside land to the multinational "Daon Development Corporation" (headquartered in Belgium at that time) who proceeded to submit to Surrey plans for a 70-townhome subdivision.

Local environmentalists, including individuals from other parts of Surrey, many Crescent Beach home owners, and the South Surrey and White Rock Naturalists group, quickly formed "The Committee to Preserve Dunsmuir Farm". They were joined by other educated experts in geography and land ecology, and the Committee went to work, first by negotiating with the Provincial Government's Green Belt Fund, and the Greater Vancouver Regional District land fund to put up funding to buy back (yes!) the land from Daon Developments. It took a lot of urgent and immediate work, lobbying and informed thinking from the Committee to get an agreement from the Province and the GVRD that they would each put up one-third of the costs of a buy-back on condition that the Municipality of Surrey would also

contribute one-third of the costs. Urging, lobbying, showing support from the local communities of Crescent Beach and South Surrey finally paid off and Surrey paid its one-third and agreed to administer the land as a park. A number years later, this land purchase was enshrined in legal language (which I can't remember now) in perpetuity as a park. In the early days, not much was done with the new parkland, but one group received a portion of the land to run and use for "neighbourhood gardens". These gardens continue to thrive there and are much appreciated by people living on the Semiahmoo Peninsula (i.e. South Surrey and White Rock) and visitors to the park.

The wilder land that surrounds the lagoon has been left intact and is now carefully contained by a strong but unobtrusive fence and gate, with signs prepared by the Naturalists group, educating and advising visitors how to treat this conserved area with respect to the flora and fauna living within it (no dogs, no picking wild flowers, cutting, etc.). Further in from the waters around the Spit's land, there is an almost 100 year-old community swimming club with pool, operated by a community board and memberships; a small sailboat club and clubhouse run by its membership; and a two-acre fenced-in, off leash dog park, administered by the Municipality of Surrey. By the way, dogs may be strictly on-leash in the many other interesting and beautiful walking areas of the Spit. Kudos to Surrey and Crescent Beach for saving this amazing place which, last Sunday when I visited it, was filled (in the communal picnic area by the ocean) with a multiplicity of ethnic Canadians and locals having a wonderful time!

I have explained how this story developed from sometime in the late 1970s as a cooperation between environmentally minded people and three levels of government. I want to trust that there are other communities in our country and province who have secured such a successful use of lands and ocean that could so easily have been endangered by obtrusive development projects. This may be a small success when looking at the effects of pipeline developments, but now in my elderly years and living in another active community on a Pacific Gulf Island, I continue to believe that people living within a fragile or endangered environment can help government at all levels make informed and conscientious decisions about land use. I am not naive about the power of big business to prevail on our governments. The First Nations people are fighting expensive law suits against big corporations (and, tragically, our governments). The corporations seem to have limitless amounts of money to pursue their goals that they don't really project realistically what can happen in the event of an "accident" to the environment. I also stand by the aboriginal people of Canada, and have contributed in different ways, including financially, to their cause.

I urge you to be strong and listen to the people who have so many stakes in keeping Canada honest and true to what Canadians want for this great country, people who want others to enjoy the land and lifestyles that most of us (as demonstrated in the last election results!) appear to hold sacred. We want to trust that you can be firm and purposeful in ensuring the assessment process is thorough, complete and forward-thinking, for our children and grandchildren. Yes, powerful corporate interests insist that all of this decision-making is urgent. Let's have the power to ignore that word "urgent" and give enough time to be careful.

Thank you for your patience in reading and considering this.

Sincerely,

Mary Gillis

<contact information removed>