

March 2023

To the Offices of: Alberta Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, Minister of Forestry,

Tourism and Parks

aep.minister@gov.ab.ca, fpt.minister@gov.ab.ca

Re: Unsustainable changes to the Minister's Special License hunting program

Dear Ministers Savage and Loewen,

Changes to the Minister's Special License (MSL) program anger and disappoint me. The extension of this program allows year-round hunting of two bighorn sheep, mule deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, moose and wild turkey. Previously, it was limited to three months.

Winter is difficult for wildlife; lack of resources, harsh weather, physical deterioration and increased susceptibility to disease leave them particularly vulnerable. They should not be taken advantage of within this time, nor during recovery (spring/ summer).

Statements from Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) officials and Alberta Professional Outfitter's Association (APOA; currently run auctions) reflect a poor understanding of these animals' ecology. For example, their claim that the removal of two bighorn rams will not affect a population is incorrect. Hunting two large, dominant rams can remove upwards of 60% of the paternity from a population. Furthermore, studies have shown that sustained, long-term hunting harms the social and genetic structures of wildlife populations. Therefore, changes to this program are not sustainable.

The extension of the MSL program is a money grab masquerading as a conservation initiative. However, should year-round hunting become the norm conservation crises will arise. The potential economic gain is not worth the ecological stress it will cause especially in Alberta which already generates \$20million a year in hunting revenue. Furthermore, the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) ceased administering auctions and raffles as AEP now retains all monies raised for internal projects. Previously, an independent panel (overseen by AFGA) reviewed grant applications for conservation-based projects.

I urge you to re-evaluate Alberta's approach to hunting programs as follows 1) uphold the current three-month restriction; 2) rather than base wildlife management decisions on the uninformed musings of APOA and AEP officials, consult with experts and First Nations; 3) instead of pandering to economic demands from private outfitters, prioritize sustainable, environmentally ethical hunting programs; and 4) funnel profits into conservation projects, not back to AEP. Put aside economic greed, political one-upmanship and corporate pandering. Ministers, do your jobs; act to protect Alberta's wildlife and maintain sustainable hunting practices.

Sincerely,

[Insert name, title(s)]

Affiliations

The views expressed in this letter do not necessarily represent those of my employer.

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Contact Information]

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