

## Summer Village of Grandview

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May 2, 2022

Hon. Jason Nixon, Minister  
Alberta Environment and Parks  
Government of Alberta

Dear Minister Nixon:

Re: Proposed Confined Feeding Operation in the Pigeon Lake Watershed

As your department is already aware, the Natural Resources Conservation Board is currently evaluating an application (RA21045) for a confined feeding operation (CFO) in the Pigeon Lake watershed. Your department is also aware of the outstanding success that Pigeon Lake municipalities and watershed residents have had in reducing the nutrient load to Pigeon Lake. The many scientific studies into the recent scourge of harmful algal blooms at Pigeon Lake have all indicated that if we want to continue to enjoy perhaps the most beautiful environmental treasure in central Alberta, nutrient loads must be reduced in order to reduce the severity of these blooms. The proposed CFO is in direct conflict with these aspirations.

With the support of AEP, the 12 municipalities surrounding Pigeon Lake accepted the challenge of reducing nutrients and have achieved outstanding results. All 12 municipalities have instituted cosmetic fertilizer bans in the lakeshore areas. Southside communities have recently completed a \$30 million sewer system. Also, the Pigeon Lake Watershed Management Plan, an award-winning initiative giving guidance for the safe and responsible development of our watershed, has been endorsed by all 12 lakeside municipalities as well as the four First Nations bands of Maskwacis. This level of intermunicipal cooperation is in itself a stellar achievement.

Unfortunately, the common interests of many stakeholders in protecting Pigeon Lake is now on a collision course with the private interests of one agribusiness, which is proposing a 4000-head confined feeding operation in the heart of the Pigeon Lake watershed. A 1200-head cow/calf operation currently on this site is already exerting significant stress on the local environment. Phosphorus levels as high as 2 mg/L, the highest nutrient levels ever measured in our watershed, have been recorded in streams draining this land. A satellite imaging project being undertaken in cooperation with the University of Alberta, the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute, and the Alberta Lake Management Society suggests these high nutrient loads could be a major cause of Pigeon Lake's algal blooms. The added nutrient load from 4000 more cattle will impose a cumulative and, in all likelihood, devastating stress on our lake.

Besides the constant flow of nutrients from ordinary operations, severe storm events that are becoming more likely with climate change, also pose an added threat of flooding that could wash sudden loads of manure into the streams that feed Pigeon Lake.

The proposed CFO application has brought the entire watershed community together with the common purpose of protecting the lake. This is not a divisive issue between the lake and farming communities but

rather a call to arms to protect a shared provincial resource from the harmful impact of one misplaced business interest.

The economy of the entire region is largely based on the value of Pigeon Lake. It is a major recreational centre enjoyed by visitors from all over Canada. We cannot forget that we are also on Treaty 6 territory and the lake is dedicated as a fishing station for the four Maskwacis Bands. Lakeside municipalities have made mistakes in the past by allowing careless development but can be proud of our recent efforts to start restoring our lake to its former glory. All of the work done in recent years by the 12 Pigeon Lake municipalities with guidance from the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association and ongoing support from AEP staff could be undone by this one proposed project.

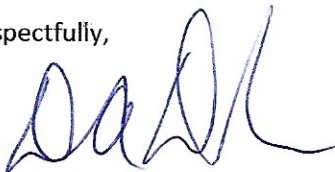
The terrible algal bloom of 2015 provides a window to the future we could face if we allowed the lake to become degraded from harmful algal blooms. Use of the lake would drop to near zero because of the stench of rotten algae, cyanobacteria warnings from Alberta Health Services, and the shoreline muck preventing lake access. Local businesses would suffer devastating financial impacts. The significant load of nutrients now threatening our lake could bring it past a tipping point with irreversible results.

The residents of the watershed will not let this happen without a challenge. There has been an unprecedented uproar over this development. The agricultural community recently organized a public meeting at the Yeoford Hall to collaborate on an action plan. The number of *Statements of Concern* submitted to the NRCB was in the hundreds and would have likely been in the thousands had the notice been posted in a transparent fashion and at a more appropriate time of the year.

Under the Agricultural Operations Practices Act, Alberta Environment and Parks can have significant impact of the decisions made by the NRCB. Your department has been consistent in providing thoughtful guidance for reducing the nutrient loads to protect Pigeon Lake. For this reason we are asking AEP to make a strong statement to the NRCB that, because of the very small land-to-water ratio in the Pigeon Lake watershed, it is no place for a confined feeding operation. The interests of thousands of watershed residents as well as a significant sector of the Alberta economy must be protected from the harmful impact of one poorly construed business venture.

The residents of the Summer Village of Grandview and, indeed, the entire watershed, are looking to AEP to take a leadership role in protecting our lake. I would be happy to meet with you and Minister Rick Wilson at your convenience to discuss this matter in more detail.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Don Davidson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Don Davidson, Mayor  
Summer Village of Grandview

cc: Premier Jason Kenney  
Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations  
Catherine Peirce, Pigeon Lake Watershed Association  
Chief Randy Ermineskin, Ermineskin Cree Nation  
Chief Vernon Saddleback, Samson Cree Nation  
Chief Leonard Standingontheroad, Montana First Nation  
Chief Irvin Bull, Louis Bull Tribe