



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2024

First Nations Call out B.C. Government for Stalling on Gondola

Cheam / Pelólxw Territory (Rosedale, B.C. CANADA) – Cheam First Nation and the Pelólxw community, including the Skwah and Kwa-kwa-a-pilt Nations, are increasingly frustrated by the ongoing lack of action from the Province of B.C. regarding their proposed Cascade Skyline Gondola Project.

“The BC Government has been stalling and creating additional hurdles for the past 6 years, rather than letting us create hundreds of jobs for Indigenous and non-indigenous people in the Fraser Valley,” said Darwin Douglas, Chief of Cheam First Nation.

Despite changes to our proposal which further reduce the environmental footprint and eliminate any claimed overlap with other First Nations, the B.C. Government has still not granted permits for the project to move forward.

“We don’t appreciate government platitudes about reconciliation, especially when it’s not matched by meaningful action,” said Johnathan Prest, Chief of the Skwah First Nation.

The re-scoped project will provide a spectacular experience, and includes:

1. Reduced project footprint (320 ha vs 450 ha) = 29% reduction in area
2. Reduced project infrastructure requirements (1 Gondola instead of 2, no longer a mid-station required, and no new roads).
3. Revised tenure boundary, eliminating any conflict with Spotted Owl wildlife habitat areas (WHAs).
4. Revised tenure boundary to avoid the study area of the proposed Bridal Veil Mountain Resort (BVMR).
5. Revised tenure boundary to avoid overlapping with other First Nation traditional territories. The project is now exclusively within the traditional territory of the Cheam and Pelólxw peoples.
6. Golf Course purchase completed by Cheam First Nation for the project base.

“Despite fulfilling every request in the B.C. Government’s opaque and shape-shifting approval process, they continue to delay,” said Chief Douglas. “This amounts to disrespect and is the opposite of reconciliation.”

The Government of B.C. continues to point to the much larger Bridal Veil Mountain Resorts (BVMR) low-elevation ski area proposal, which has been opposed by the majority of First Nations and municipal governments since its first iteration more than 20 years ago, as one reason for the permitting delay. This even though the two proposals no longer overlap the same tenure area.

“The BVMR concept would cut right through the heart of the protected Spotted Owl Wildlife Habitat Area, effectively cutting it into three pieces. Environmental impacts including massive water use for snowmaking et al., and other negative, long-term effects on our lands that you would expect a large 18-lift industrial ski resort would have”, noted Chief Douglas. “In contrast, our Cascade Skyline Gondola Project is designed to be an eco-cultural tourism destination with one lift, to help protect and enhance our lands while providing accessible transportation to bring people safely above the Fraser Valley to enjoy the Cascade Mountains in our traditional territory.”

A key component of the Cascade Skyline Gondola Project remains a Stó:lō cultural interpretive centre with programming about First Nations history and culture. This will be located on lands of the former Bridal Falls Golf course, recently purchased by Cheam First Nation.

“We look forward to inviting everyone to the interpretive centre, as well as to the mountains,” Chief Randy Leon, Kwa-kwa-a-pilt First Nation. “However, the B.C. government has been getting in the way for the past 6 years.”

Letters of support for the Cascade Skyline Gondola Project have been provided by the Mayor and Council of Chilliwack, the Mayor and Council of the District of Kent (Agassiz), Tourism Chilliwack, Indigenous Tourism BC, and the Tourism Industry Association of BC. Many other groups have also gone on record supporting the project. BVMR has received no such support.

“In the strongest possible terms, we urge the Government of B.C. to immediately approve our project and allow it to move forward for the benefit of our people, their economic and cultural futures and the benefit of the broader Fraser Valley community”, concluded Chief Douglas.

About Cheam First Nation - As part of the Pelólxw people, Xwchíyò:m (Cheam First Nation) is a major community within the broader S’ólh Nation. The Xwchíyò:m have lived in S’ólh Téméxw for thousands of years. They have never ceded or surrendered title to their lands, rights to their resources, or authority to make decisions within their territory.

###

For media inquiries, please contact:
Harmony Poisson
d) 604-745-8008
Harmony.Poisson@cheamband.com



