



May 3, 2003

Honourable Mike Cardinal, Minister  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Dear Mr. Cardinal:

**Regarding: Alberta Fish and Game Association Concern for the Sale of Public Lands**

On behalf of the Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA), I would like to express our concern for any increased effort by the Alberta Government to sell public land.

Mr. Dave Broda introduced the April 14, 2003 motion and discussion in the legislature and as amended it stated:

“Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to sell or dispose of public lands that are declared surplus to the needs of the province.”

The AFGA has had a long-standing policy that supports the retention of the ownership of public lands (Crown Lands) by the people of Alberta. The AFGA has always suggested that these lands serve as useful fish and wildlife habitats and at the same time provide access opportunities for hunters, anglers, bird watchers, conservationists and other recreational users.

Times have changed and will continue to change with public lands becoming more and more in demand. The following reasons are offered for the retention of all public lands in the ownership of Albertans.

1. In recent years and in many communities the landscape has changed with the development of large fences for game farms. The large fences on private lands have influenced land availability for wildlife and for users. The odd piece of public land in these communities secures some future for the wildlife.
2. In many communities the only remaining “bush areas” are the pieces of public land. These pieces of wildlife habitat provide some refugia for a variety of wildlife species and have become rare natural landscapes in many communities. Their value cannot be measured purely in economic terms.
3. The demand from more and more people is growing and will increase in the future. The snowmobilers, ATV users, bird watchers, local residents and travellers, berry pickers, hunters and anglers are wanting or needing spaces such as public lands.
4. The expansion of urban communities as towns or cities grow or as subdivisions develop is placing greater demands on these remaining public lands in the settled areas. Such consumptive uses reduce not only hunting and fishing access but also reduce agricultural opportunities.
5. AFGA manages large numbers of lands (over 30,000 acres) that have been acquired for fish and wildlife conservation and does conduct some habitat programs and projects. By selling other habitats associated with public lands it would appear that our Government would be working in opposition to our long-term goals.
6. The value of public lands to a leaseholder does not appear to change whether it is privately owned or held as a lease. In fact some lessees believe the public land is more valuable as a lease. AFGA does not believe that a retention of public lands policy will harm the leaseholders.
7. The grazing leaseholders have over the years retained some wildlife habitats and user opportunities. The private lands do not afford such a security for the future Albertans.
8. The amount of money that the sale of public land would raise seems so minor when considering the “values” that are at stake. The family farm holds a heritage value for all existing Albertans and the many, many Albertans who are yet to come in the future. We have a heritage fund and we need to have a heritage of secure public lands spread out throughout the Province.

**ALBERTA**

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The AFGA believes that our organization, established in 1908, is unique in representing a large number of hunters, anglers and conservationists throughout the Province. With 106 clubs, 6 zones and over 15,000 members spread across Alberta the AFGA truly represents grassroots citizens throughout the Province. We believe that our members provide a balanced view on various issues but our concerns on the sale of public lands is firm. The selling of public lands through past initiatives has always been opposed and again we ask our Alberta Government to defeat any plans to sell our future and our heritage.

Thank you Mike for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Makowecki". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ray Makowecki,  
AFGA President

Cc. Honourable Ralph Klein  
Mr. Peter Elzinga  
MLA's  
Dave Broda  
AFGA Executive

*~ The Alberta Fish & Game As is your voice for Conservation ~*