

Ottawa

Room 349, Confederation Building
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Tel.: 613-996-1119
Fax: 613-996-0850



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Ottawa

Pièce 349, Édifice de la Confédération
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0A6
Tél. : 613-996-1119
Téléc. : 613-996-0850

Constituency

9711 Fourth Street Suite 1
Sidney, British Columbia V8L 2Y8
Tel.: 250-657-2000
Fax: 250-657-2004

Elizabeth May

Member of Parliament / Député(e)
Saanich — Gulf Islands

Circonscription

9711, rue Fourth suite 1
Sidney (Colombie-Britannique) V8L 2Y8
Tél. : 250-657-2000
Téléc. : 250-657-2004

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A A06

June 25, 2021

Dear Minister Bennett,

For many years, Tsawout First Nation has asserted its claim to LEL,TOS, also known as James Island, which is a small island within my constituency. I am writing to ask for federal support for LEL,TOS' return to Indigenous title.

The island was part of the homelands of the WSÁNEĆ People and provided a rich and productive way of life. When it was taken over as a munitions plant for WWII efforts, the WSÁNEĆ People thought the island would be fully returned once it was no longer in use. Instead, in later years, the island was sold to a company which had plans to develop the island. The development was abandoned, and the island was then sold to billionaire Craig McCaw in 1994. McCaw has lived on the island for several years, but now has plans to establish an idyllic getaway with fewer than 100 homes, in partnership with Arizona-based Discovery Land Corp. The WSÁNEĆ People continue to assert their claim to the land and hope that the island will be restored as a part of their homelands.

Tsawout First Nation asserts that LEL,TOS should have been protected under the Douglas Treaty, as evidence points to extensive settlement areas and burial remains. The island has always been part of the WSÁNEĆ Peoples' active traditional territory and was consistently accessed for settlement, food and medicines until colonization efforts impacted traditional ways of life. The WSÁNEĆ People continued to access the island until they were forced to leave, sometimes violently threatened at gunpoint.

As a member of the Southern Gulf Island's Forum, which is made up of elected First Nation leaders, as well as local, provincial, and federal government representatives, we co-signed a letter to the provincial Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Honourable Rob Fleming. The letter urges the provincial government to ensure that it is meeting its obligations under the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), in all current and future subdivision projects in the region, including the proposed development plans on LEL,TOS (James Island). I will attach this letter for your reference.



The proposed development on LEL,TOS (James Island) is currently in front of the provincial authoritative body. I hope the federal government will support the island's return to Indigenous title.

If you have any questions about Tsawout First Nation's land claim, or the development on LEL,TOS (James Island), please notify my office and we will connect you with the appropriate contacts.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth May, O.C.
Member of Parliament
Saanich-Gulf Islands
Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada

