



**Standing Committee on Finance**

**Comité permanent des finances**

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⊕ (1535)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.)):** Meeting to order.

Just for the record, pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, April 30, 2019, we're examining Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019 and other measures.

**The Chair:**

Turning then to Norquay Ski Resort, Ms. Waterous, managing partner. Welcome.

**Mrs. Jan Waterous (Managing Partner, Norquay Ski Resort):** Thank you.

I'm going to quickly address the primary purpose for Norquay's invitation today, and then I

will provide a brief summary of what Norquay has done since to address one of the initiatives identified in the 2013 site guidelines—that being the feasibility of creating aerial transit between the town of Banff and Norquay ski hill.

To begin, we confirm that Norquay is supportive of the government amending Schedule 5 of the National Parks Act to update Norquay's lease to reflect the 2013 Norquay site guidelines. These amendments are detailed in the documentation deposited in the Alberta land titles office in Calgary, Alberta, and we request no amendments.

With this out of the way, I'll now speak to my family's efforts to explore the feasibility of creating aerial transit to Norquay and other green initiatives as part of our science-based approach to vehicle and visitor management—which includes the creation of an eco-transit hub at the Banff train station.

By way of background, I have been a resident of Banff for 22 years. During that time, my family—like so many of our neighbours—have grown increasingly concerned about traffic congestion and parking in the town and around the national park. In fact, as the years went by, it was commonplace to hear members of our community say, “What are they going to do about it?” One day, we stopped and asked ourselves, “Just exactly who is this 'they'?”

You see, there have been many great ideas put forth over the years by various levels of government and private stakeholders to address park congestion, but what became clear to us is that these same groups lacked the real estate and the infrastructure to create meaningful change. For example, intercept parking was identified in 1979 as official Banff town policy, yet 40 years later not a single intercept parking lot has been built, because the real estate simply was not available. Passenger rail between Calgary and Banff was discontinued in 1990 because VIA Rail's ridership was suffering due to poor on-time performance—a result of freight understandably being prioritized over passenger trains on the single track. Finally, aerial transit to Norquay—despite being identified for at least 30 years as infrastructure that could enhance the environment of the important Cascade Wildlife Corridor that runs right through the Norquay

access road—had never even a chance to come to fruition because the ownership of the Norquay ski hill and the Banff train station had never, in Banff's history, been in the same hands.

These all struck us as transformative initiatives, so about four years ago my family and I decided to become part of the “they” and essentially stand on the shoulders of other people's great ideas, and see if we could assist in advancing all three initiatives.

Firstly, my family bought the multi-decade lease to the Banff train station, and subsequently purchased the multi-decade lease for the 32 acres of land that surround the Banff train station, with the sole purpose of creating intercept parking for our community. I am proud to say that Banff's first ever 500-car, free-of-charge intercept parking lot is under construction now and is scheduled to open this summer.

Secondly, we've been working to assemble the approximate \$800 million in private and public capital to build a Calgary-Banff dedicated passenger rail line within the existing CP Rail corridor. We have been making very encouraging progress in this regard.

Finally, last year we bought the Norquay lease, so the possibility of building aerial transit between the train station and the Norquay hill could finally be explored. Since then we have had experts conduct science-based research on the potential wildlife benefits for a gondola as a forerunner to conducting a Parks Canada environmental impact assessment to determine if the gondola creates the required substantial environmental gain.

As an extension of these initiatives, on March 25 I stood before Banff town council and proposed that it consider adopting a resident-only vehicle pass for the national park, whereby all day visitors to Banff park for free at one of two intercept lots at the train station that together would offer 2500 parking stalls.

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In this scenario, hotel guests would park at their respective hotel accommodations and both groups would only use buses and shuttles to reach points of interest around the broader national park. Essentially, Banff National Park would become car-free. Recognizing that a genuine partnership is necessary for a resident-only vehicle pass to truly succeed, I also proposed to town council that should the town agree to its implementation, upon the gondola becoming operational, my family will lease both intercept lots to the Town of Banff for 30 years, free.

My family firmly believes that the combination of intercept parking, aerial transit to Norquay, the reinstatement of passenger rail, and the implementation of a resident-only vehicle path will create a national model for green transit for other towns and cities across Canada to emulate.

Thank you for your time today. I really appreciate it.

⌚ (1600)

**The Chair:** Thanks very much, Ms. Waterous.

**The Chair:**

Mr. Richards.

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** Thanks.

I just want to start by acknowledging Jan Waterous, who's a constituent of mine. I want to thank you for standing up and being the “they”. The project that you're putting forward is a very ambitious project, but one that's going to make a big difference for residents and visitors alike, and for the environment as well, so thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Waterous, congratulations on what you're trying to do. Why I want to ask you a question, I'm in an area where there's a national park. As I'm sure you already realize, national parks are not always easy to work with in terms of their restrictions.

In terms of trying to get where you folks are trying to get to in Banff, the Norquay Ski Resort, are there impediments that we can deal with federally or is it running along smoothly?

**Mrs. Jan Waterous:** Well, as you mentioned, it's definitely challenging working in a national park. The federal group that we, of course, are dealing with quite regularly now is Parks Canada. I would say that so far our consultation has been very good with them. It hasn't been speedy. It has taken longer than we would have liked, but we do feel some encouragement that it will begin to hasten a bit and get a little faster.

While it is challenging working in a national park, one opportunity for our specific project is that because there are so many rules and regulations in Banff, and in any national park, on how you do things, it really is an opportunity to create this laboratory that other communities and towns across Canada could perhaps emulate. It is challenging, but it's also an opportunity to really make sure that it's done correctly.

We see it as we're looking at the long game. At the same time we're very proud of what we've accomplished in the last three and a half years.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for that. I know all about dealing with Parks Canada.

🕒 (1650)

**The Chair:**

Mr. Poilievre.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Thank you very much.

I'd like to start with Ms. Waterous.

I grew up in Calgary and I can tell you, having a direct link, car-free, between Calgary and

Banff would be an incredible accomplishment. It would be great for the local businesses in Banff and for the local residents there. It's hard to imagine a solution that accomplishes both more commercial business for the vendors who are in Banff and less pollution and traffic at the same time, but you seem to have found the solution that does both.

So congratulations to you and your family for also putting your money where your mouth is and stepping up and leading. I think it's great for the environment and for the economy at the same time.

Is there anything the government needs to be doing differently so that this initiative can succeed?

**Mrs. Jan Waterous:** First of all, thank you very much for your praise. I appreciate that. My family appreciates that.

You know, we are now doing a lot of consultation. We focus most of our consultation. We're starting at the grassroots and working our way up, so we've been working a lot within the town council and the local Parks Canada community, now Parks Ottawa, as well as the provincial government and various other agencies, but most importantly, the people who live in our community and in the Bow Valley.

So at this point I would say that the federal government support is really going to be, I assume, funnelled through Parks Canada and we are hopeful that that will continue on a very positive path. So far I would say that they have given us a lot of constructive feedback on how to proceed and we have been very happy with the support we've had from them, as I mentioned earlier.

The only disappointment we've had is that it takes a very long time and we were very keen to progress and to do it as fast as we can so that all Canadians benefit. We think it's something that will benefit not just those who live in the Bow Valley or in Alberta but all of the visitors, the 4.2 million people who come to Banff National Park every year. As I'm sure you know, the visitation is going up, not down.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Right.

**Mrs. Jan Waterous:** So it's an issue that's not going to go away and we want people to know that when they come to Banff National Park that it's different, that they're in a national park and they move around differently because of that.

So that's what we're trying to do.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Right. It's a typical Alberta mentality. If you see a problem, roll up your sleeves and fix it. I like that. We need to have more of it and hopefully we can get governments to move faster to keep up with your pace.