

An open letter to the Honourable Aglukkaq

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq

Minister of Environment, Government of Canada

June 22, 2015

Dear Minister Aglukkaq,

We are writing to you to express our support for the proposed building of the Never Forgotten National Memorial at Green Cove in Cape Breton Highlands National Park. As you know, according to the National Parks Act, Article 4: “The National Parks of Canada are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment subject to this Act and the regulations, and the parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Further, The Parks Canada Charter has as its mandate; “On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada’s natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.”

In an open letter dated June 4th, 2015 addressed to you by former senior Parks Canada Managers they insisted that the positioning of the Never Forgotten National Memorial at Green Cove “was in violation of the site’s Wilderness Zone designation as detailed in the Management Plan for the Park.” This is a complete falsehood! The signers apparently did not do their homework or deliberately mislead you. The map on page 37 of the Cape Breton Highlands Park Management Plan clearly shows that Green Cove is well outside the designated Wilderness Zone and is characterized as a Zone 4 site; this was confirmed by Derek Quann, Acting Superintendent at the C. B. Highlands Park office on June 22, 2015. Zone 4 designation is given to small areas that are capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for education and outdoor recreation, including the major facilities and infrastructure required for visitor experience. Direct access by motorized vehicles is permitted here but not in Wilderness Zones.

The Green Cove site currently has a paved parking lot, an interpretive panel and a boardwalk to facilitate access to the headland by able-bodied persons. In the creation of the Cabot Trail a great deal of blasting took place and some of the material was used as fill to fill gaps between the mainland and the headland. This was also the site of a small village prior to being appropriated for the National Park. This appears to be an ideal location for the Never Forgotten National Memorial as it meets the Zoning Designation in the Plan for the Park and will not require any intrusion into a wilderness area.

Presently, the Park has little in the way of cultural exposition. In the Plan, Article 3.2.5: “Parks Canada must ensure that cultural resources and cultural landscapes are recognized, protected and presented so that the public can learn about and appreciate the Park’s cultural heritage.” Further, Article 5.1.2 of the Plan states that Parks Canada “working with partners, explore the possibility of offering natural /cultural experiences where visitors not only enjoy natural surrounding but also immerse themselves in the deep cultural roots within the communities.” In Article 5.2 “in collaboration with communities and stakeholders, the Park will explore the human history of the Highlands. By linking the past and the present our cultural heritage helps us appreciate the

human experience and better understand who we are as Canadians.” Further the Park will “develop interpretive products in Ingonish that complement natural and cultural features to convey a sense of place.” Article 6 states “Parks Canada will provide increased opportunities for Canadians to be involved with Parks Canada places in activities they consider meaningful and relevant.”

Tony Trigiani, the founder of the Never Forgotten National Memorial, was inspired by his visit to a cemetery in Italy to do more to commemorate the memories of our fallen veterans. In 2010, the Bank of Canada hired a Toronto company ‘The Strategic Council “to survey persons across Canada to comment on the design of the new twenty dollar bill which features the Vimy Memorial on the reverse side. The report, according to the polls: “many Canadians don’t know that the Vimy Memorial in France even exists with many mistaking the Vimy Memorial on the twenty dollar bill for the Twin Towers (N.Y. City).”

Mr. Trigiani sought a site in a National Park which would reflect the power and serenity of the Never Forgotten National Memorial. With the advice of New Waterford native, Neil MacKinnon, who was then President of the Canadian Command of the Army, Navy, and Air Force veterans association, the site at Green Cove was chosen. A further cultural association to the area was realized when it was discovered that – per capita- this area of Northern Cape Breton had the highest recruitment rate for Canada in the two Great Wars.

The little village of Green Cove may be considered representative of the many similar communities in Canada where determined settlers eked out a living from nature’s resources. All of these communities were not too small to send their sons and daughters to participate in the cause for freedom throughout the world – some never returned home. What better site could we have to help Mother Canada welcome those fallen Canadians? In her plain garment devoid of any military paraphernalia, an everywoman - arms outstretched - ready to embrace her children once again.

In conclusion we heartily and respectfully support the commemorative Never Forgotten National Memorial at Green Cove, in Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

Sincere regards,
Ray and Audrey Stapleton
37 Barb’s Lane
Ingonish Centre NS
B0C 1L0