



OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

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August 10, 2026

Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Province of British Columbia

Via Email: WLRS.minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Rescinding the Salmon River aksc^win Temporary Protection Order without consultation with the Syilx Okanagan Nation

Dear Minister Neill,

On behalf of the Syilx Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council (CEC), we are deeply concerned by your decision to rescind the Salmon River aksc^win Temporary Protection Order effective August 8, 2026, without consultation or meeting with the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

The Salmon River aksc^win watershed is within the unceded Territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. Syilx title and rights have never been surrendered, extinguished or ceded. The Syilx Nation has governed and cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial in accordance with Syilx law, captik^wl and nsyilxcən teachings.

Our siwłk^w Water Declaration affirms our relationship and responsibility to siwłk^w. siwłk^w is not simply a resource to be allocated among competing users; siwłk^w is a living relative and sacred medicine that sustains salmon, tmix^w and all life. Syilx law places responsibilities upon us to protect and care for siwłk^w for present and future generations. Those responsibilities are inseparable from our inherent jurisdiction, title and rights as the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

The Syilx Okanagan Nation does not accept that British Columbia has exclusive authority to make decisions concerning siwłk^w within Syilx Territory. Nothing in our participation in provincial drought processes, the Collaborative Stewardship Forum, Water Scarcity setting, or other collaborative initiatives constitutes consent to, or acquiescence in, unilateral provincial decision-making over siwłk^w, salmon, or Syilx lands and waters. The Syilx Nation maintains our unceded title, Aboriginal rights, inherent jurisdiction and responsibilities under Syilx law.

The decision to impose, modify or rescind restrictions on water withdrawals in the Salmon River therefore directly affects Syilx title, rights, jurisdiction and responsibilities. The Syilx Nation is

¹ Syilx territory is in the South Thompson, Lower Thompson, Nicola, Okanagan and Similkameen basins of the Thompson Okanagan Region defined by the Province of BC. {000201-0000.0001 01068093}



not another stakeholder. We are the title and rights holders in the Salmon River watershed. Engagement with licence holders cannot replace engagement with the Nation.

We understand that prior to rescinding the Order, you travelled to the region and met with farmers and ranchers regarding its impacts. We recognize the serious drought and wildfire circumstances facing agricultural producers and communities. Syilx communities are facing these same conditions. Our concern is not that you met with farmers and ranchers. It is that you heard directly from one group affected by the Order, made your decision, and never met with or consulted the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

The Province has indicated that elevated wildfire risk was a significant factor in rescinding the Temporary Protection Order. The Syilx Okanagan Nation understands that the Bradley Creek wildfire is now contained and no longer poses the same immediate threat to Salmon River residents. While we recognize that wildfire response required careful consideration at the time, the circumstances relied upon by the Province have changed. In contrast, the Province has acknowledged that critically low stream flows, drought conditions, and concerns for ntytyix, Chinook salmon persist. The circumstances that supported rescinding the Temporary Protection Order have changed. The ecological conditions that led to the Order have not.

The decision also undercuts the collaborative work that the Syilx Nation and British Columbia have undertaken on drought and water scarcity. In September 2025, Syilx leadership met with you and senior provincial officials regarding concerns with B.C.'s drought-setting approach. Following that meeting, you directed the Natural Resources Committee and Collaborative Stewardship Forum to work toward a collaborative solution. Since then, Syilx representatives and provincial regional staff have invested significant time and good faith developing a water scarcity setting process that brings Syilx knowledge, data and jurisdiction into water decision-making.

A unilateral ministerial decision on a significant water-scarcity measure within Syilx Territory, made without engaging the Nation, undermines that commitment and undermines the trust and collaborative processes we have been working to build.

This is also inconsistent with the direction CEC has already provided regarding the current water crisis. In May 2026, the Syilx Okanagan Nation declared a Watershed Emergency across the Okanagan, Nicola, Similkameen, Kettle, Salmon and Bessette watersheds. CEC reaffirmed the Nation's inherent rights, responsibilities and jurisdiction to protect, restore and care for siwłk^w in accordance with Syilx law, knowledge systems, governance and the siwłk^w Water Declaration. CEC specifically called upon British Columbia to establish a co-governance forum with the Syilx Nation to monitor and assess water scarcity and to recognize fish-protection flows at which emergency protection measures are required.

The August 8 decision demonstrates precisely why that shared decision-making structure is necessary. CEC therefore requests:

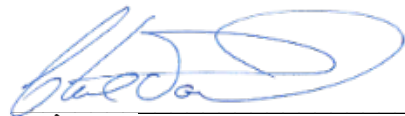
1. **Immediately reinstate the Salmon River Temporary Protection Order** while critically low streamflow and fish-protection concerns remain.
2. **Continue strong provincial leadership on water conservation.** The Province must clearly communicate that rescinding the Temporary Protection Order does not mean a return to normal conditions or business as usual. Stream flows remain critically low, and water conservation remains essential.
3. **Undertake a collaborative Syilx–B.C. review of water use, streamflow, fish populations, and agreed ecological decision thresholds across the Salmon River watershed.** This review should establish transparent, science-based and Syilx-informed thresholds for future decisions regarding Temporary Protection Orders, water restrictions, and other drought response measures. The Syilx Nation has consistently approached this work in the spirit of collaboration. Collaboration matters most when decisions are difficult. It cannot be set aside when the Province is faced with competing interests or political pressure.

British Columbia must recognize that decisions about siwłk^w in Syilx Territory engage a Nation-to-Nation relationship. Respect for Syilx title and rights requires more than informing the Nation after a decision has been made. Respect for Syilx law requires recognition of our responsibilities to siwłk^w and salmon before decisions affecting them are made.

We expect the Province to address this matter urgently, repair the damage caused to the collaborative relationship, and ensure that this approach is not repeated.

Respectfully,

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE



ki law na yil'mix^{wm} Clarence Louie
xa?tus, Tribal Chair, Chiefs Executive Council

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