

## An Open Letter to Scouts Canada

August 2019

Dear Sirs and Mesdames,

**Re: Tamaracouta Scout Reserve (TSR)**

We are Group Commissioners in the Montreal area and are writing to express our serious concern regarding the closure of TSR.

TSR is a jewel among Scouts Canada's properties. It has played an integral role in the delivery of great, safe Scouting adventures for over 100 years. Since TSR's closure in November 2018, however, Scouts Canada's actions have contributed to a breakdown of trust and a fear for TSR's future.

At this critical juncture, therefore, it behooves us all to work together to overcome any challenges and to ensure that TSR reopens as quickly as possible.

### **TSR: A Jewel among Scouts Canada's properties**

In case it needs to be repeated, TSR is an incomparable resource and an integral part of the Scouting programs that we deliver. For us, TSR offers year-round facilities brimming with adventure and fun for youth of all ages. It features 1000 acres of mountain ranges, forests, grasslands, bogs, lakes, rivers, streams, and waterfalls, all within close proximity to Montreal.

Our camps are a precious resource, ours to cherish, discover and support.

- Scouts Canada website

There are few properties like TSR in Scouts Canada's entire portfolio. Apart from its size and unique features, it benefits from a strong reputation, both nationally and internationally, making it an important connection to the wider Scouting community. Indeed, national and international troop frequently seek it out and take advantage of its many riches.

In 2013, M. Madison conducted an environmental assessment of TSR. The author identified a wide range of ecosystems and habitats located within its boundaries, making it of moderately high ecological value. However, it also includes several high ecological value elements, like a wetland complex that is the rarest and highest valued ecosystem in Argenteuil.

This environmental assessment report was followed by a feasibility study, which was conducted in 2014, and described ways in which TSR could partner with nearby organizations and institutions to capitalize on its rich diversity. Both studies were done in collaboration with the University of Sherbrooke.

Since then, we understand that other business plans have been developed too.

### **The need to rebuild trust**

Over the last number of months and years, there has been a significant loss of confidence in Scouts Canada. Scouts Canada's broken promises, lack of transparency, poor communications, and history of mismanaging properties have all fueled this breakdown of trust. Here are some examples.

We were told that Scouts Canada is undertaking a review of its entire property portfolio. Yet it has never been properly explained to us why TSR needs to be closed during this review. We understand that most if not all other Scouts Canada properties remain open during this process.

Scouts Canada's November 2018 email announcing TSR's temporary closure was tempered by a commitment to transparency, community engagement, and quarterly updates. Yet none of those things came to pass. Instead, there's been nothing but secrecy, which is contributing to a growing sense of distrust and allowing rumours to spread. Indeed, opportunities for community engagement were promised by February 2019, but have still not materialized.

The only update that we have received to date came in May 2019, but it raised more questions than it answered. Certainly, we were left with the impression that little progress is being made towards reopening TSR as quickly as possible.

Between the November 2018 and May 2019 emails, it is also difficult to discern a consistent explanation for TSR's closure. Is TSR closed for failing to make a profit or has Scouts Canada identified some safety or other regulatory concern of which we are unaware?

### **Meaningful participation requires information**

Throughout its communications, Scouts Canada has continuously expressed its commitment to transparency and community engagement. To meaningfully participate in this process, however, we need information that only Scouts Canada can provide. Only through the sharing of relevant information can Scouts Canada hope to engage in a meaningful dialogue with stakeholder groups, like ours. Indeed, volunteer support is among Scouts Canada's five key priorities for success.

To that end, we would like to formally request the following documents and information (whether such documents reside with Scouts Canada or with Boy Scouts of Canada Quebec Provincial Council Inc.):

1. The minutes of all meetings at which the closure of TSR was discussed, along with all of the materials, assessments and reports on which those decisions were based.

2. As mentioned in the November 2018 email, all documents and information concerning the “repairs and significant infrastructure upgrades [required for TSR] to continue to be a viable, safe property for our youth to enjoy.”
3. As mentioned in the May 2019 email, all “assessments of Tamaracouta [revealing] that the property needs significant infrastructure upgrades to remain compliant with environmental regulations....”
4. The status of TSR’s review and formulation of a viable strategic plan. Related questions include: What professional asset management firm has been retained to conduct this review? What are the terms of its engagement (including compensation)? What are the timelines for conducting this review?
5. Confirmation that the professional asset management firm retained by Scouts Canada will be provided with the 2013 environmental assessment report, 2014 feasibility study, and any other business plans that were later developed. A considerable amount of work went into preparing these documents and that work need not be repeated.
6. Full financial details concerning TSR’s profitability over the past 10 years.
7. Any plans, strategies or other documents directed at reopening TSR or improving its profitability.

Providing this information will be a significant step towards supporting Scouters in the Montreal area and rebuilding the trust that will be needed as we work together towards reopening TSR as quickly as possible and ensuring that it has every chance to thrive. In our view, these goals are consistent with Scouts Canada’s key priorities, including membership growth, program quality, volunteer support and group capacity.

#### **Moving forward with a renewed sense of trust and collaboration**

Once the information above has been received and digested, we think it is important that we arrange a meeting between us, other friends of TSR, and the appropriate people at Scouts Canada.

At this meeting, it will be essential to compile a full list of the concerns that have led to TSR’s closure and to embark on the formulation of a plan aimed at addressing those concerns in a way that allows TSR to reopen quickly and to succeed.

It goes without saying that the longer TSR is closed the more difficult it will be to reopen. This is of grave concern to us. We would appreciate hearing that Scouts Canada’s priorities are aligned with ours and that it too wants to see the camp reopened as quickly as possible.

Should Scouts Canada have some other plans for TSR, then it should immediately be honest and transparent about its intentions. Such honesty is owed to us and to the people of Montreal. Scouts Canada ought to be supporting local groups and helping them grow, but its unilateral

decision to close TSR has had a significantly negative impact on volunteers, the youth we serve, and Scouts Canada's reputation in the area.

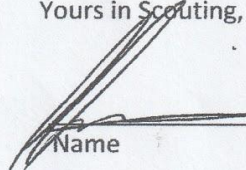
Montrealers care deeply about TSR. We understand that they gave generously to create an outdoor adventure playground for youth in the area. As a result, Montrealers could, conceivably, retain some residual property interest in TSR, should it stop operating for the benefit of local youth.

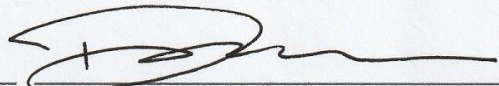
In our view, it is time for Scouts Canada to emerge from the shadows and to *meaningfully* engage the community in the way that it has been promising to do for many months. Transparency and information sharing are essential to the success of this process.

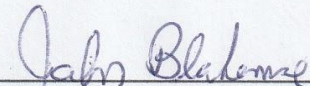
The community is rallying around TSR. There is a groundswell of support for TSR and a committed team of volunteers determined to see it succeed. Let's harness these energies and work together to reopen this amazing camp.

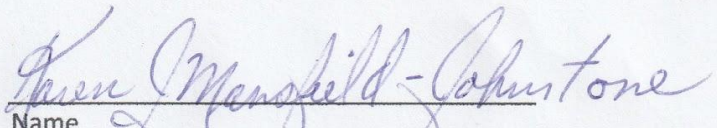
We look forward to receiving the information requested above as quickly as possible and to scheduling a time when we could meet, possibly at TSR.

Yours in Scouting,

  
Name G. Smith  
Fairview  
Group

  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Istvalois United  
Group

  
Name John Blalome  
Service Team  
Group

  
Name Karen Mansfield-Johnstone  
1st Montreal West  
Group

decision to close TSR has had a significantly negative impact on volunteers, the youth we serve, and Scouts Canada's reputation in the area.

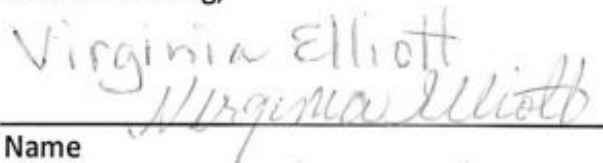
Montrealers care deeply about TSR. We understand that they gave generously to create an outdoor adventure playground for youth in the area. As a result, Montrealers could, conceivably, retain some residual property interest in TSR, should it stop operating for the benefit of local youth.

In our view, it is time for Scouts Canada to emerge from the shadows and to *meaningfully* engage the community in the way that it has been promising to do for many months. Transparency and information sharing are essential to the success of this process.

The community is rallying around TSR. There is a groundswell of support for TSR and a committed team of volunteers determined to see it succeed. Let's harness these energies and work together to reopen this amazing camp.

We look forward to receiving the information requested above as quickly as possible and to scheduling a time when we could meet, possibly at TSR.

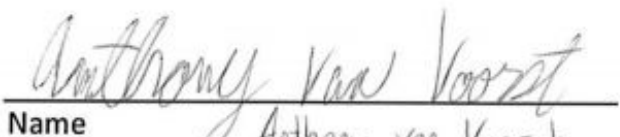
Yours in Scouting,

  
Virginia Elliott

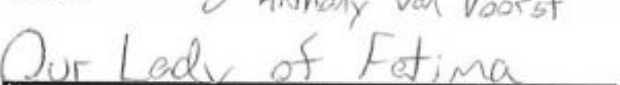
Name

  
2ND Westmount

Group

  
Anthony van Voorst

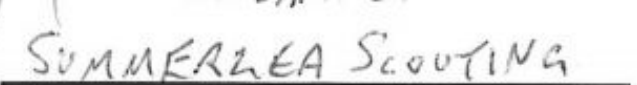
Name

  
Our Lady of Fatima

Group

  
H.A. BARTLET

Name

  
SUMMERLEA SCOUTING

Group

  
Deborah MacLeod

Name

  
Westmount-Park

Group

decision to close TSR has had a significantly negative impact on volunteers, the youth we serve, and Scouts Canada's reputation in the area.

Montrealers care deeply about TSR. We understand that they gave generously to create an outdoor adventure playground for youth in the area. As a result, Montrealers could, conceivably, retain some residual property interest in TSR, should it stop operating for the benefit of local youth.

In our view, it is time for Scouts Canada to emerge from the shadows and to *meaningfully* engage the community in the way that it has been promising to do for many months. Transparency and information sharing are essential to the success of this process.

The community is rallying around TSR. There is a groundswell of support for TSR and a committed team of volunteers determined to see it succeed. Let's harness these energies and work together to reopen this amazing camp.

We look forward to receiving the information requested above as quickly as possible and to scheduling a time when we could meet, possibly at TSR.

Yours in Scouting,

*Paul Fortokjian*

Name

Name

*1<sup>ST</sup> ROSMERE MEMORIAL*

Group

Group

Name

Name

Group

Group

decision to close TSR has had a significantly negative impact on volunteers, the youth we serve, and Scouts Canada's reputation in the area.

Montrealers care deeply about TSR. We understand that they gave generously to create an outdoor adventure playground for youth in the area. As a result, Montrealers could, conceivably, retain some residual property interest in TSR, should it stop operating for the benefit of local youth.

In our view, it is time for Scouts Canada to emerge from the shadows and to *meaningfully* engage the community in the way that it has been promising to do for many months. Transparency and information sharing are essential to the success of this process.

The community is rallying around TSR. There is a groundswell of support for TSR and a committed team of volunteers determined to see it succeed. Let's harness these energies and work together to reopen this amazing camp.

We look forward to receiving the information requested above as quickly as possible and to scheduling a time when we could meet, possibly at TSR.

Yours in Scouting,

Ria Di Marco (Ria Di Marco) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Name

1st David Thompson \_\_\_\_\_  
Group Group

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Group Group

decision to close TSR has had a significantly negative impact on volunteers, the youth we serve, and Scouts Canada's reputation in the area.

Montrealers care deeply about TSR. We understand that they gave generously to create an outdoor adventure playground for youth in the area. As a result, Montrealers could, conceivably, retain some residual property interest in TSR, should it stop operating for the benefit of local youth.

In our view, it is time for Scouts Canada to emerge from the shadows and to *meaningfully* engage the community in the way that it has been promising to do for many months. Transparency and information sharing are essential to the success of this process.


The community is rallying around TSR. There is a groundswell of support for TSR and a committed team of volunteers determined to see it succeed. Let's harness these energies and work together to reopen this amazing camp.

We look forward to receiving the information requested above as quickly as possible and to scheduling a time when we could meet, possibly at TSR.

Yours in Scouting,

  
Name

ST-ANDREWS REGISTRAR  
Group

  
Name NEIL MACKINNON

ST. ANDREWS, WESTMOUNT  
Group

  
Name

1<sup>st</sup> Volois United  
Group

Name

Group

SIMON HARTE Sillato  
Name

JOHN MANCINI J.M. i  
Name

BEACONSFIELD SCOUT GROUP.  
Group

BEACONSFIELD SCOUTS.  
Group

Marie-Josée Dubé  
Name

Jessica Lalonde.  
Name

Beaconsfield Scout Group  
Group

Beaconsfield Scouts Group.  
Group

PATRICIA MAFFEIS  
Name

Peggy Furo  
Name

Beaconsfield Scout Group  
Group

1e Mount-Royal  
Group

Sean Maguire  
Name

Sean Maguire  
Name

Kirkland Northwest  
Group

Scouts  
Group

Allie Godin  
Name

Name

1<sup>er</sup> Groupe Scouts Briceland  
Group

Group