

SAMPLE LETTER TO HONORARY PATRON (from Sean Howard), APRIL 2015

Dear X,

I am writing with regard to your position as Honorary Patron of the proposed Never Forgotten National Memorial at Green Cove, an ecologically-pristine site in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. I am concerned you may have lent your name and prestige to the project, for I'm sure sincere motives, without full knowledge of the powerful scientific and environmental case and broad-based social campaign against the Memorial.

The NFNM Foundation describes Green Cove as a “natural fit” for the project, an “already developed area with no identified environmentally sensitive zones and no known endangered species or habitat at this time.” This is, I'm afraid, a gross distortion of the facts. In the view of many scientists, construction of the extensive concrete complex is palpably at odds with Parks Canada's mandate to protect the land and coast in its care and would, among other damage, irreparably destroy a unique, internationally renowned geological feature known as the Black Brook granitic suite. As Dr. Sandra Barr, Professor of Geology at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, commented in the *Cape Breton Post* (October 15, 2014): “It's a unique package of rocks in Nova Scotia. It only occurs in that area. I feel it's one of the top sites in Nova Scotia right now that I want people to go and visit. The rocks themselves are very compelling for me, and that site itself is very compelling to me, so I'm strongly opposed to covering it over with concrete.” Dr. Barr, who is supported in her stance by the Atlantic Geoscience Society, expressed broader concerns in a letter to *Geolog*, the Newsletter of the Geological Association of Canada (Spring 2014):

In addition to objecting to the destruction of the natural environment in a place dedicated to protecting it, many people are concerned that adequate environmental assessment and community consultation has not taken place regarding the proposed development. Environmental concerns include water supply and waste disposal at the development, and its location right at the eroding coastline.

To cite just a few other examples of opposition – as thought-through as it is heartfelt – to what would amount to an act of environmental vandalism: in March 2014, Garry Briand, a retired Parks Canada nature photographer, declared “I cannot think of a worse location. Green Cove's sensitive alpine microsystem needs less visitation, not more”; in February 2014, the *Cape Breton Post* argued that “allowing private interests to permanently and dramatically alter the Cape Breton Highlands National Park's Green Cove headland – which is celebrated for its natural beauty and unique landscape – would appear counter” to Parks Canada's mandate; and in January 2014, Gordon Rideout, President of the Royal Canadian Legion branch in Ingonish, Cape Breton, commented –

I think it's a great idea for a memorial. I think it's the wrong location... You're in the middle of probably one of the most beautiful national parks in the country. What's going to happen here is that the Cabot Trail of course will have to be rerouted. There's going to be an information centre there. There has to be of course washroom facilities and everything else put in there. And it's just going to spoil one of the most overlooked places on the trail. I don't think it should be put there. It's going to turn it into a small Disney World.

Though opposition to the proposed site continues to grow, the federal Government is clearly determined to proceed on an expedited basis, aimed for a grand opening on Canada Day, 2017 – to which, as Honorary Patron and prominent Canadian, you may well be invited. You may well be fully aware of the scale, scope and seriousness of growing the anti-NFNM movement, and fully convinced in your own mind that the ironic ecological devastation involved – harming the land you wish to proudly celebrate – is a price worth paying. If, however, you are not familiar with the criticisms of the project outlined above, I urge you to review your support and consider publically withdrawing it.

I would, of course, be happy to provide more details of the case against the Memorial and would welcome any comments, including criticisms, you may have.

With peace and all best wishes,

Sincerely,

Dr. Sean Howard
Adjunct Professor, Political Science
Cape Breton University