



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

November 20, 2025

Office of the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta
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Concerning Conflicts of Interest for Todd Loewen, Alberta Minister of Forestry and Parks

To Sean McLeod, Ethics Commissioner of Alberta:

We are writing to express our concerns with the conduct of Todd Loewen, current Alberta minister of Forestry and Parks, and conflicts of interest in his role, and request an investigation. Representing over 10,000 members and supporters in Alberta and across Canada, AWA is dedicated to conserving and protecting Alberta's wilderness. We oppose recent decisions on hunting, trapping and wildlife management which conflict with the advice of expert biologists and currently available science, placing these species and the health of our ecosystems at risk.

Over the past year, Minister Loewen has made several changes that affect Alberta's wild species. He has increased the cougar quotas, authorized hunting of "problem" grizzly bears by members of the public, removed trapping limits on sensitive furbearer species and expanded the area in which cougars can be hunted. He has also allowed off-leash hunting dogs in provincial parks, expanded the species that can be hunted under a Minister's Special License, lowered the minimum age of hunting, permitted wasting of meat or skins and allowed hound-hunting of black bears.

These changes heavily favour a small group of hunters, trappers and outfitters, a group that Minister Loewen maintains close personal connections with. Prior to his current role, Minister Loewen was the owner of Red Willow Outfitters, a guide outfitting business. The business currently lists his wife and son as the primary stakeholders and remains an active outfitting business. The Minister has been active in attending Safari Club International Convention Shows and the Wild Sheep Foundation Summit, both organizations that promote hunting of large predators. He also maintains associations with the Alberta Trappers Association and has passed his traplines to his sons.

Consultations for these changes only occurred with a few hunter, trapper and outfitter associations, and did not even include many individual and local hunters and trappers. In removing trapping limits for furbearers, the department spoke only with Alberta Trappers Association, and in expanding cougar

quotas and area, the interests of hunter groups alone were considered¹. There was no engagement with biologists, conservationists, Indigenous nations, recreational users, producers and ranchers, or members of the public who enjoy the benefits of wildlife. Repeated requests from AWA and others for additional information or to speak with the Minister have been largely ignored.

These changes are detrimental to Albertans who enjoy wildlife viewing and the benefits of sustainable wild populations, including other hunters and trappers that rely on these animals. By opening the province to more hunting, at the cost of scientific evidence and sustainable wildlife populations, we are likely to reduce or extirpate many of the targeted species.

The Alberta Conflicts of Interest Act states, “A Member breaches this Act if the Member takes part in a decision in the course of carrying out the Member’s office or powers knowing that the decision might further a private interest of the Member, a person directly associated with the Member or the Member’s minor or adult child.”² The associated Public Agencies Fact Sheet states, “Senior officials may not take part in a decision knowing it might further their private interests or those of a person directly associated with them (e.g. spouses or companies they own)”³. The Legislative Assembly of Alberta states that the role of a Minister is to “develop policies and programs that best serve Albertans...”⁴ We find Minister Loewen is in violation of his responsibilities to Albertans by favoring a minority of hunters, trappers and outfitters.

A few of the ways in which the Minister’s personal interests are affected by his decisions are provided below.

Relaxing of regulations for black bear hunting

Red Willow Outfitters lists black bear hunting as one of their offerings on their website. Allowing hunting with dogs is expected to increase the success rate of black bear hunts, a statistic often used to promote services and draw interest. Outfitters will also have the option to increase the price of guided hunts which include the use of dogs. This decision could result in a direct benefit to the guide outfitting business of the Minister’s spouse and adult son.

Promotion of Minister’s Special Licenses

Since taking office, Minister Loewen has made several international trips aimed at promoting the Minister’s Special License. In 2025, he made 5 separate trip to visit 6 locations on taxpayer dollars, costing \$20,953.90, according to the Alberta government’s Travel and Expense Disclosure Table⁵. This does not include a July trip announced for Oklahoma “Promoting bird hunting and conservation”⁶. Only

¹ Anderson, D. June 16, 2025. ‘Not based on science’: documents show internal government scramble to expand Alberta cougar hunt. Retrieved September 24, 2025 from: <https://thenarwhal.ca/alberta-cougar-hunting-documents/>.

² Conflicts of Interest Act, RSA 2000, c C-23.

³ Government of Alberta. May 1, 2020. Conflicts of Interest Act : public agencies fact sheet. Retrieved September 24, 2025 from: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/conflicts-of-interest-act-public-agencies-fact-sheet>.

⁴ Legislative Assembly of Alberta. [n.d.] The Role of a Member. Retrieved September 24, 2025 from: <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/learn/the-legislative-assembly/roles/the-role-of-a-member>.

⁵ Government of Alberta. 2025. Travel and Expense Disclosure Table. Retrieved September 26, 2025 from: <https://www.alberta.ca/travel-and-expense-disclosure-table>.

⁶ Government of Alberta. July 24, 2025. Promoting Retrieved September 26, 2025 from: <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=93674657900D4-F279-CD7F-A160CB5AABD227D5>.

\$4,473.84 was spent by the Minister other business this year. In total, he has spent \$37,600.79 on international trips to promote hunting since becoming Minister of Forestry and Parks.

In contrast, previous ministers rarely made trips for the international promotion of hunting. For instance, Jason Nixon, formerly Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism, spent an average of \$5,445.21 between 2019 and 2021. He took one international trip in 2022, costing \$3,893.50, and spent a total of \$9,547.91 that year. None of these trips were aimed specifically at promoting the Minister's Special License abroad.

Non-resident hunters must use the services of a local outfitter, and this promotion may increase interest in hiring his family's business for a hunt. White-tailed deer—a species added to the license by Minister Loewen—as well as elk, mule deer and moose, are all species that can be hunted with a Minister's Special License. They are also species that Red Willow Outfitters advertises hunts for. Government funds should not be used to promote the Minister's personal interests.

Lifting of trapping limits

Minister Loewen previously owned traplines, which he has stated have been passed to his sons. The removal of trapping limits on sensitive furbearer species, including wolverine, fisher, river otter and Canada lynx, allows greater numbers of these species to be killed each year, and their fur or meat sold for profit. Owners of traplines, including members of the Minister's family, are expected to see benefits from this change.

Hunting of large predators

Minister Loewen has stated his belief that hunting of predators will boost ungulate populations, such as white-tailed deer, mule deer and elk, which his family's guide outfitter business advertises hunts for. His decisions have largely targeted predators including bears, cougars, wolverine and lynx.

His decisions further align closely with the interests of particular hunting, trapping and outfitting associations, which he has shown close connections to. For instance, his increase of cougar quotas, particularly female cougars, coincided with a bounty offered by Wild Sheep Foundation on cougars. The bounty offered an additional incentive for females. His decisions are clearly influenced by the interested of a few hunter, trapper and outfitter groups.

Minister Loewen's close connections to a particular group of hunters, trappers and outfitters are at odds with his role in wildlife management. Recent changes overseen by the Minister clearly favour this group, allowing unsustainable harvest that threatens Alberta's wild species. These decisions are unsupported by current scientific information, and do not align with the advice of experts. We find that his personal interests are interfering with his responsibilities to make decisions in the interests of all Albertans, and ask that his conflicts of interest be investigated.

We look forward to your prompt response and investigation.

Sincerely,

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruiping Luo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ruiping Luo
Conservation Specialist

EXPOSED WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "MSP". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maggie Spizzirri
Executive Director