



September 17, 2010

Select Standing Committee on Government Finance and Services
Government of British Columbia
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC V8V 1X4
financecommittee@leg.bc.ca

Dear Select Standing Committee:

Thank you for inviting comments on provincial spending. BC Nature has a serious concern about the reduced financing of BC Parks and Protected Areas.

Parks and Protected Areas provide Refugio for wildlife and for people, protect and conserve biodiversity, play a vital role in keeping our air and water clean, provide essential services for food security (pollinators, predators), offer refuge for threatened species, and help provide buffers against the impacts of climate change.

Improvements are urgently needed to:

- Encourage more people to visit parks thereby contributing to healthier lifestyles,
- Connect kids, families and communities to nature
- Help ensure meaningful, safe visits
- Increase spending by tourists
- Ensure protection for the natural habitats of BC Parks.

Tremendous benefit to the public would result from an increase of a few million extra dollars. Government spending on public infrastructure throughout BC is working to create jobs in local communities. This submission is a plea to government to recognize that BC Parks are an ideal venue in which to create jobs and strengthen communities. Dollars spent in Parks contribute greatly to attracting tourists and encouraging active lifestyles of BC residents, which in the longer term will help reduce health costs.

This years analysis of the Ministry of Environment by the Auditor General is right on:
From the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, John Doyle, M.B.A., C.A.
Report 3: Conservation of Ecological Integrity in B.C. Parks and Protected Areas
www.bcauditor.com Executive Summary page 6

“British Columbia’s parks and protected areas

- about 1,000 in all – are integral to the quality of life in this province. These are a help to purify the water, provide habitat to rare and endangered species, regulate climate, and contribute to British Columbians’ physical, mental, economic, social and spiritual well-being.”

He goes on to make seven very timely recommendations. The first of which is;

“We recommend that:

1. The ministry update its BC Parks Program Plan so that it includes clarification of ecological integrity and performance targets that adequately address the ministry’s goal of proactive stewardship of ecological integrity.”

BC Nature agrees with the Auditor General’s findings that the provincial government through its Ministry of Environment is not completing its plans, meeting its vision and definitely not consulting enough with the public. We would like the Province to examine the ways Quebec, Ontario and New Zealand governments have engaged the public in their parks.

We would like to see a little less money spent on illness and a little more used to promote wellness. We would like to see a larger budget for BC Parks and Protected Areas. A small change in our spending philosophy and a little more value placed on our parks will be more cost effective in the long run.

To improve the quality of life of British Columbians the government must become

“NATURE FRIENDLY”

Respectfully submitted;



John Neville
President BC Nature (Federation of BC Naturalists)