



October 18, 2013

To the Honourable Christy Clarke  
Premier of British Columbia  
Via email: [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Madam Premier:

I'm writing as President of BC Nature to congratulate you and all the provincial governments since 1971 for expanding the area of our provincial parks five-fold. They are truly a jewel in our province. BC Nature has 5300 members and we all enjoy BC Parks throughout the year. I am writing to make a plea that you find a way to increase the funding to BC Parks.

I understand that BC has the third largest park system in North America, after the two national park systems. I also understand that BC Parks is the sixth largest park system in the world! About 20 million people visit BC Parks each year, the same number that visits our national parks. This is an awesome achievement. Unfortunately, the funding for BC Parks has stayed at about \$40 million since 1971. The national parks now receive about ten times more funding for their operation with a similar number of visits. Parks are an important part of our economy. I have also heard that fewer Canadian families are visiting our parks. We need to reconnect more BC families with our parks.

I know and understand that we in BC cannot match federal funding but we should be slowly increasing the budget for our parks. It has been shown that in our park system there is a return of \$ 8 dollar for each dollar spent. This formula indicates a great way of creating jobs.

I am told by member clubs of BC Nature and the Young Naturalists' Club (who provide programs to thousands of kids each year) that many children are initially frightened of the woods, do not want to touch a tree or hold a sea star. Children increasingly play indoors because "that's where the outlets are." Many children are suffering from what is known as "Nature Deficit Disorder", well documented by Richard Louv's, *Last Child in the Woods*.

Madam Premier, I am asking you to re-connect children and their parents with our wonderful BC Parks. It is well known that physical and mental health improves with outdoor activities. By increasing the budget for BC Parks you can make the parks more people friendly, thereby helping to decrease health care costs. This connection between 'Healthy Parks and Healthy People' has been confirmed through a great deal of international research. We know that many people socialize in parks, far more than with their apartment neighbours. We know that parks are an important part of our economy. We should be encouraging more people to embrace our outdoor facilities like those in New Zealand, Britain, Germany and the USA. Please Madam Premier, look at the benefits of the Young Naturalists Clubs (YNC) of BC and the Salt Spring Island Conservancy Stewardship program and other volunteer programs. BC Nature is organizing three camps next year in Tofino, Nicola Valley and Wells Gray Park. These camps are designed to give pleasure, access to the outdoors and natural history interpretation. All of these activities promote BC Parks and the outdoors. You have a wonderful opportunity to do something very special in this beautiful province, to reconnect people to nature and their communities through visits to BC Parks, to create jobs and to help increase visits from tourists.

I ask again, please find a way to increase funding for BC Parks. I would greatly appreciate a response that will give us your thoughts and plans to increase the annual budget for the BC Park system.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Neville".

John Neville, President  
Federation of BC Naturalists (BC Nature)