June 19, 2020

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
c/o Parliamentary Committees Office  
Room 224, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

By email: FinanceCommittee@leg.bc.ca

Submission to:  
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for BC Budget 2021

Re: Need for increased funding for BC Parks

BC Nature (the Federation of BC Naturalists) wishes to add our voice to the many calls for increased funding for BC Parks and increased protected areas in the 2021 provincial budget. BC Nature represents more than 50 naturalists’ clubs and 6,000 members province-wide. Our membership consists of dedicated naturalists and scientists who are connected to, have expertise in, and concern for the preservation of British Columbia’s landscapes and the diversity of organisms that inhabit them.

BC Nature has worked closely with BC Parks for many decades and has always been a strong supporter of our unique and precious provincial park system. It is clear, however, that our parks are seriously underfunded, understaffed and many are in a state of neglect. Large areas of our most diverse ecosystems remain unprotected and vulnerable. Numerous polls have shown that BC residents highly value the BC Park system, for recreation and for preserving natural ecosystems and wildlife. Over 70% of BC residents responding to a recent poll requested increased funding for BC Parks. In today’s COVID-affected world, with restrictions on travel and recreation opportunities, our provincial parks will be expected to play an even greater role in keeping our population healthy, well-spaced, fit and able to enjoy nature.

We strongly urge the Standing Committee to heed the recommendations made by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), and specifically:

- Increase funding to BC Parks by $60 million, to reverse the cuts made over recent years and enhance the ability of BC Parks to meet the needs of our people, ecosystems and wildlife.
- Commit $40 million to creating new protected areas, especially in those parts of the province supporting the highest biodiversity.
- Provide funding for management plans for all protected areas in BC; many are lacking such essential plans.
- Create working partnerships with Indigenous governments and environmental NGOs to identify the greatest needs for increased park funding and increased protected areas.
Investing in BC Parks is an excellent way to boost our COVID-affected economy. Several studies have shown that parks contribute far more to local and provincial economies and employment than the investments made. Investing in park infrastructure and increased protected areas will create lasting economic and environmental benefits.

We strongly urge the Committee to heed the overwhelming desire of BC residents for greatly increased funding for BC Parks and for increased protection of sensitive ecosystems. Many of our clubs have worked closely with BC Parks in the past and continue to do so now. BC Nature and its federated clubs are keen to collaborate with BC Parks staff to secure wildlife and ecosystem quality and enhance the human experience in these parks.

Yours truly,

Harry Crosby
President, BC Nature

CC: Premier – Hon. John Horgan - premier@gov.bc.ca
CC: BC Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy – Hon. George Heyman - ENV.minister@gov.bc.ca
CC: BC Minister for Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development – Hon. Doug Donaldson - FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca
CC: BC Minister of Finance – Hon. Carole James FIN.Minister@gov.bc.ca
CC: Finance Committee - FinanceCommittee@leg.bc.ca