
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dec. 12, 2005

The Editor
Abbotsford News

Editor:

I would like to set the facts straight in response to your recent editorial on British Columbia's parks.

Just over four years ago, we inherited a \$40 million park infrastructure deficit from the previous NDP government. To help catch up with those needed improvements, our government has made significant capital investments in the parks system.

This year alone we are investing \$12.2 million in parks facilities – the largest investment in the past 15 years. This is in addition to the \$24 million we invested in parks during the first four years of our mandate.

To help pay for more improvements, our government also introduced modest parking fees in some provincial parks, with every penny being invested back into our parks system. The federal government charges parking or entrance fees in national parks and it's not unusual for provinces to charge user fees for their parks. Ontario charges \$7 to \$15 just to enter their parks, while Saskatchewan charges \$7 for a day pass. In comparison, B.C.'s day-use vehicle parking fees range from \$3 to \$5 per vehicle.

As with any new program, there are bound to be some glitches. That is why I have asked for a review of the parking fee program. I expect the review's report to be completed in time to implement possible changes for next summer.

Finally, I want to make this clear – our parks are protected from mining and logging. Some tree removal is necessary from time to time to prevent wildfires and to respond to the pine beetle infestation.

B.C.'s parks are among our most treasured assets and this government is committed to ensuring they continue to bring pleasure to everyone who visits for years to come.

Sincerely,

Barry Penner
Minister of Environment