
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

June 24, 2005

The Editor
Alaska Highway News

As British Columbia's new environment minister, I was extremely disappointed with your opinion piece from June 21st attacking B.C.'s environmental record. The article was long on rhetoric, short on facts and read more like an American-style political fundraising letter than a thoughtful analysis piece.

B.C.'s highly-regarded Progress Board ranks our province No. 1, above all others, in environmental quality. That ranking takes into account, among other factors, urban air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, waste water treatment and B.C.'s protected areas system. We have kept that ranking for four straight years and all British Columbians can be proud of that achievement.

The article overlooked the fact that in the last four years, we created 37 new parks and expanded 34 others. We introduced species at risk protection for the first time in B.C. under the Wildlife Act. We introduced a comprehensive Drinking Water Action Plan to strengthen groundwater protection and improve water quality. And in an effort to protect air quality, we created more regional air shed plans than the NDP did in 10 years.

On climate change, B.C. now has a goal of acquiring 50 per cent of all new electricity from clean sources – a goal that has been met and exceeded in the past four years. Our 40-point climate change plan sets out a target of maintaining British Columbia's current position as the province with the third lowest greenhouse gas emissions per capita.

We have a wonderful environmental legacy to maintain in our province. With a renewed commitment to environmental sustainability in the decade ahead, it's my job to work with my colleagues to see that B.C. leads the world and has the best air and water quality and the best fisheries management, bar none.

Sincerely,

Barry Penner
Minister of Environment