



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

August 19, 2005

The Editor
The Daily Courier

Editor:

I read John Harding's editorial (Liberals forget what's important about camping Aug. 19) with interest. While I agree with him that we have gorgeous parks in B.C., I must point out some important facts he missed.

Four years ago we inherited a \$40 million parks infrastructure deficit from the NDP. We had an expanded parks system without sufficient funding. Our government had two choices: let our parks fall apart because of the short-sightedness of the previous government or find a way to put them on a sound financial footing. Of course, we chose to properly maintain, and enhance our parks system.

This year we're spending \$12.2 million to upgrade amenities such as picnic tables, camping facilities, water facilities and bathrooms in B.C. parks so that people can have a good experience when they visit. This is the largest parks capital budget in more than 15 years. We will be investing \$20 million in capital improvements over the next three years, in addition to the \$24 million already invested.

I've spent the last few weeks touring a number of our beautiful provincial parks. People are telling me that if they know money raised by parking fees will go back to maintaining our parks system, then they don't mind paying them. Every penny has gone back into the parks system.

While B.C. parks are already among the best in the world, this government is making significant investments that will make them even better.

Sincerely,
Barry Penner
Minister of Environment