

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Aug. 30, 2006

The Editor  
Prince George Citizen

After reading the Aug. 19 column by Paul Willcocks, your readers can be forgiven for thinking that the idea of fixed-roof accommodations is something new in our provincial park system. In fact, more than 160 such facilities already exist, ranging from basic shelters to Manning Park Lodge.

In the past, decisions were made on an ad hoc basis. The recently announced Fixed-Roof Accommodation Policy was prepared to clarify the type and scale of accommodation that will be considered. This will provide consistency to the decision-making process.

BC Parks will continue to own the land and will be able to set stringent terms and conditions for how the facilities will operate. Operators will have to pay annual fees to the government for permits. All revenue will stay within the park system to help fund services and programs.

Since 2001, our government has established 41 new “Class A” parks, including four new parks this year alone. Our park system is huge – it’s bigger than Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands combined.

But not everyone who wants to spend a night in a BC Park is able or willing to sleep on the ground in a tent.

Providing different kinds of accommodation options in parks will attract new visitors, complement other recreational opportunities in parks and contribute to the development of tourism in nearby communities.

Any proposal for fixed-roof accommodation will have to consider the park’s recreational values and respect the park’s conservation objectives. That means any new development will have to complement the natural BC Parks experience – not detract from it.

Furthermore, any new development must be consistent with park management plans, will be encouraged to incorporate green technologies and will be subject to First Nation and public consultation.

Government’s vision for parks is founded on a central principle – to maintain the ecological and conservation role and integrity of our parks. With the safeguards that have been put in place, we can expand recreational opportunities and increase visitation without detracting from that vision.

Barry Penner  
Minister of Environment