



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Nov. 1, 2005

The Editor
Times Colonist

Editor:

This weekend I was surprised to read that your newspaper now says it is against user fees in parks (No meters in our parks, Oct. 29).

Two months ago, the Times Colonist had a completely different view when Parks Canada announced that it is planning to charge entry fees (\$6 for adults and \$15 for families) for Pacific Rim National Park starting in March 2006. This is what your Aug. 16 editorial said: "Some think parks paid for by taxpayers should be free to the public, but not every taxpayer across Canada has the inclination or opportunity to step around the slugs in the rainforest, chase the shorebirds along the sand or ride the Long Beach surf. Even in nature, user pay seems fair."

It is not unusual for provinces to charge user fees for their parks. Ontario charges fees of \$7 to \$15 just to enter their parks, while Saskatchewan charges \$7 for a day pass. In contrast, B.C.'s day-use vehicle parking fees range from \$3 to \$5 per vehicle.

Four years ago, we inherited a \$40 million parks infrastructure deficit. B.C. had an expanded parks system without sufficient funding. As part of the solution, our government introduced modest parking fees in some provincial parks, with all revenue going back into the parks system.

This summer, I personally encountered difficulties with a parking ticket dispenser while visiting one of our beautiful B.C. parks.

As with any new program, there are bound to be teething problems. That is why I have asked for a review of the program and I expect a report in time to implement possible changes for next summer.

Sincerely,

Barry Penner
Minister of Environment