

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sept. 12, 2006

The Editor
Vancouver Sun

After reading Shane Simpson's Sept. 11 letter, it's obvious he doesn't find it necessary to consider the facts when discussing fixed-roof accommodations in B.C.'s parks.

Simpson fails to mention it was under the previous NDP government that the last park lodge (in Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park) was initiated, in the absence of a clear and consistent policy.

Our government's recently announced Fixed-Roof Accommodation Policy was prepared to clarify the type and scale of accommodation that can be considered, and to provide consistency to the decision-making process.

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. There are more than 11,000 campsites in BC Parks and they will continue to be available.

Any proposal for fixed-roof accommodation will have to consider the park's recreational values and respect the park's conservation objectives. 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.

And, unlike the previous NDP government, we are investing in our park system. Five years ago, we inherited a \$40 million parks infrastructure deficit from the NDP. To address that, the Province is investing more than \$25 million in park capital improvements and park acquisitions. Since 2001, we have established 41 new parks, including four new "Class A" parks this year alone. Again, this is something that Simpson happened to overlook.

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