

DRAFT RESOLUTION 2016 – 04

Increase the funding for BC Parks

Proposed by the Executive Board of Directors of the Outdoor Recreation Council (the Council)

PREAMBLE

BC's extraordinary provincial parks are truly world class! There are few countries in the world, let alone states or provinces, which can claim to have such an extensive and spectacular park system. In addition to protecting thousands of hectares of British Columbia's varied ecosystems in which British Columbians can hike, climb, ski and paddle and otherwise enjoy the outdoors, it is these parks which are the true emblem of Supernatural BC and which attract visitors from all over the world. Our parks system is the largest provincial system in Canada, and yet it is one of the worst funded on a per-hectare basis in the country.

While many if not most British Columbians value their parks, as do many visitors from outside the Province, the BC Government does not appear to do so. For many years the BC Government has starved BC Parks of the operating funds required to adequately maintain the infrastructure in the parks and maintain the number of park rangers at the level required to provide adequate visitor services. The only parts of the Provincial Parks which are reasonably well funded are the front country areas with developed camp sites, which are administered through contracts with Park Facilities Operators (PFOs). The PFOs receive and retain fees from the public for their services and it is those fees which they use to maintain the facilities they manage. This anomaly in the park funding model leads to a distorted view of the Provincial Parks and an impression, by persons taking a superficial view, that the parks are adequately funded.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the area of the BC Parks system more than doubled during the past 20 years from 6.5 million hectares to 14 million hectares and the number of Provincial Parks and Protected Areas increased from 490 to 1,029 in 2014; and

WHEREAS in the same 20 year period the number of Full Time Employees was reduced from 486 to 195 in 2014, to be partially replaced with Park Facilities Operators who do not have the same responsibilities, knowledge or authority as Park Rangers, each of whom is responsible for up to ten parks; and

WHEREAS BC Parks' annual operating budget of \$31 million has barely increased since the year 2000; and

WHEREAS the demand for campsites in BC's Provincial Parks almost invariably exceeds the number available; and

WHEREAS the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in its November 2015 report recommended that the budget of BC Parks be increased; and

WHEREAS the 2016 Provincial Budget contained no significant increase in the budget for BC Parks;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council and all its member organizations contact all BC's ministers and MLAs to ensure that they are aware of the inadequate state of funding for BC Parks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council call on like-minded non-government organizations with a similar interest in BC Parks to join a concerted campaign for a significant increase in the funding of BC Parks in 2017.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council urge the BC Government to increase the operating budget for BC Parks in order to maintain the infrastructure in the parks, such as trails, bridges and other facilities, and to hire more Park Rangers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council and its member organizations adopt and promote the following proposal to Ministers and MLA's, to be implemented by the BC Ministry of Finance in the 2017-18 Provincial Budget:

1. Increase the annual operating budget of BC Parks by 10% a year for five years; and
 2. Increase the number of campsites in all BC Parks by 10% a year for five years.
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