

Media release – Immediate release

“Campaign for BC’s Parks” Launched, Opposes New Resorts in Parks

August 3, 2006, (Vancouver, BC) ~ A group of high profile British Columbia conservationists have joined forces to deal with the challenge of maintaining the integrity and sustainability of BC’s Class A Parks. “Right now we are faced with a surprise announcement made last week by the BC government who announced a call for proposals for roofed accommodations in 12 provincial parks. We are all strongly opposed to the building of new for-profit accommodations, including resorts and hotels, in Class A provincial parks,” said leading environmentalist Vicky Husband.

“BC’s internationally renowned parks are a sacred trust for wildlife, nature and for our children and they must be protected. Resorts and hotels belong outside parks, not inside. We will continue to support environmentally sustainable tourism development outside of parks,” commented Husband.

Groups who oppose this government initiative include the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Canada Parks and Wilderness Society – BC Chapter, World Wildlife Fund Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation, Federation of BC Naturalists, EarthCare Society, Wildsight, Sierra Club of Canada - BC Chapter, Valhalla Wilderness Society, Transboundary Watershed Alliance, West Kootenay Eco Society and West Coast Environmental Law.

“Its time to put developers on notice. Should bids be accepted to develop in parks, we will take a targeted message to the marketplace against these new operations to ensure they stay out of our Class A provincial parks,” said Gwen Barlee, representative of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

“The tourism industry needs to move wisely on this issue,” states Husband. “While we will oppose new resorts in parks, the Campaign for BC Parks will work with the tourism industry and those operators who are interested in building environmentally appropriate facilities outside of parks, not inside. We all strongly oppose any new hotels and resorts in parks. We know that many tourism operators agree with this. This is not good for BC, local communities, tourism, BC’s parks, or the wildlife that live there. Any threat to our world renowned parks and protected pristine wilderness will impact on our international reputation.”

- a) “With these types of developments come parking lots, staff housing, logging for fire blocks, helicopter traffic, sewage, and electricity. Can you imagine how caribou or grizzly bears will react to daily helicopter traffic taking guests and staff to the resort? How will that affect the wilderness experience? When does a park stop being a park?” said Ellen Zimmerman of Wildsight.

b) more . . .

“British Columbians love their parks, they want the wilderness in parks to be protected, not blighted by resorts,” says Chloe O’Loughlin of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. “What we need is a new vision for parks – where well-managed parks result in thriving communities, healthy families and fit citizens. They are a priceless natural legacy that must be looked after for generations of British Columbians to come.”

“Today we are launching the Campaign for BC’s Parks to rally British Columbians to join us in keeping the wild beauty and natural integrity of our world class parks system for the generations to come,” Husband said.

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For more information contact:

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Wildsight, Ellen Zimmerman, Program Manager, 250-348-2225

World Wildlife Fund Canada, Dr, Chris Elliott, Regional Vice President, 604-678-5152

(See next page for ways citizens can help the campaign.)

You can help the Campaign:

Here are some points you could use in an email, phone call, or letter to Minister of Environment Barry Penner:

Email: env.minister@gov.bc.ca

Phone: Enquiry BC 1-800-663-7867, ask for Min. of Environment / Minister's Office at 387-1187.

Write:

Ministry of Environment
PO Box 9047 Stn Prov Govt
Rm 112, Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC V8W9E2

- Minister Penner announced his 'lodge strategy' and has issued 'Requests for Proposals' in 12 parks.
- The Fixed Roofed Accommodation policy allows 100+ bed facilities in parks.
- He says that no new roads will be built but that helicopter pads and marinas will be built to get people into the lodges.
- He says that this is being done to accommodate seniors who don't like sleeping on the ground in campsites.

Key messages:

1. Lodges/hotels/resorts should be "OUTSIDE the park, not within."
2. The government has said "let the marketplace decide" so we are making sure that the marketplace knows our feelings and we will take action to ensure that these facilities are built outside the park, not within.

It is better to have these lodges/hotels/resorts in communities outside the park where they will benefit the communities economically. People will stay in the lodges and be taken into the park by local eco-tourism operators, then in the evening will go to a local restaurant, movies, clothing store, grocery store, etc. Local citizens will be able to use these lodges for meetings, events, etc. especially in the off season (which will be good economically for the lodge.)

Other points

93% of British Columbians believe that wilderness within parks should be preserved. (*Taken from the government's 2006 household survey*)

When BC's parks were legislated, hotels/resorts were not envisioned or planned.

It was these seniors who advocated for these parks, and who want these parks left in tact for their children and grandchildren.

A 100 bed facility will also require: water, electricity, sewage, staff housing, dock/helipad, and open space for fire breaks - these will make a large footprint in parks.

Fire suppression and logging for beetles will occur in parks for 'safety reasons' as a result of these hotels/resorts, all contrary to ecological integrity

There was no public consultation done prior to approving this policy.

There was no First Nations consultation done prior to approving this policy.

Once again, the key messages are:

1. Lodges/hotels/resorts should be "OUTSIDE the park, not within."
2. Campaign for BC's Parks will take action to ensure that they are not built.