

Recommendations for BC Budget 2019-20

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – BC Chapter (CPAWS-BC) is a non-profit, grassroots-based conservation organization. We are one of 13 chapters across Canada that has helped protect over 400,000 square kilometres of threatened areas in the country. In BC, we have played a significant role in the creation of our provincial and national parks, which now account for more than 15% of our land base in the province.

As a collaborative organization, CPAWS-BC works with a broad base of partners ranging from academics to recreation advocates to naturalist clubs and more. CPAWS-BC has a unique perspective on the issues which affect BC's provincial parks and protected areas, which have become a cornerstone of BC's tourism economy. On behalf of our 18,000 members in the province, we thank the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for your time and consideration of our recommendations for BC Budget 2019, detailed in this submission.

CPAWS-BC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUDGET 2019:

- **Recommendation #1:** Increase base operational funding for BC Parks to \$60M in Budget 2019, an increase of ~\$10M from Budget 2018. This funding will support monitoring and enforcement, public safety, recreational infrastructure, and conservation planning.
- **Recommendation #2:** Commit a one-time investment of \$100M in Budget 2019 for the purposes of creating new protected areas in BC, in order to access immediately available matching funds from the federal government's Nature Fund.

THE CASE FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT IN OUR PARKS

The provincial government is mandated to safeguard over 1,000 protected areas, covering over 14 million hectares, for world-class conservation, outdoor recreation, education and scientific study. Not only do these areas hold intrinsic value, but their economic contributions also help to bolster a strong and sustainable economy. From the ecosystem services provided by healthy landscapes, to rural jobs held by hard-working British Columbians, to an increase in visitor spending, **our protected areas provide direct and measurable benefits to the citizens of BC.**

Healthy, functioning ecosystems help clean our air and water, provide necessary habitat for our world-famous wildlife, and facilitate the movement of many species, from migrating songbirds to grizzly bears. Protected areas offer highly valuable ecosystem services like carbon sequestration and flood mitigation, and have also been shown to provide human health benefits. It is critical that protected areas are managed and maintained to the highest standard in order for these benefits to be fully realized.

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed continued underinvestment year after year, from cuts to science capacity to understaffing for monitoring and enforcement. Many campgrounds, trails and

parking lots are filled to capacity and struggling to keep up with demand, while others lay neglected, underutilized, and unmanaged.

In BC, there is a recognized need for strategic investment and further development of our parks system. In the two most recent provincial budgets (Budget 2017 and Budget 2018), BC Parks received a small increase in operational funding that has led to the creation of quality jobs, programs to connect British Columbians to our natural spaces, and opportunities for new Canadians to experience the best of what our province has to offer.

However, given the accumulated impacts of multiple decades of an overburdened and under-resourced system, **this was just a first step and there still remains a fundamental need for a larger investment in BC Parks.** This need has been supported in the past by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services¹, and is widely accepted as being a sound financial investment for the province in the long term.

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DIRECT BENEFITS TO BC FROM INCREASED INVESTMENT IN PARKS

HEALTH BENEFITS: Ever-growing demands from work, increasing housing prices and more screen-centred lives make getting outside and being active more challenging for the average family. As the province strives to make life more affordable, **increasing access to and safety of our parks and protected areas is a low-cost way to provide direct and indirect health benefits, through outdoor recreation.**

The estimated annual cost of inactivity in British Columbia is \$422 million, with \$185.7 million in the form of direct costs (hospital, physician, drug, institutional and other costs), equal to 1.6% of total government spending on these services. An additional \$236 million is indirectly lost each year due to productivity losses from premature death and disability. The lowest estimate of inactivity costs in BC is \$357 million and the upper end estimated at \$600 million.² Ongoing investment in recreation, including investing in BC's provincial parks as primary places for recreational activities, is also an investment in our communities and our health.

¹ Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services [Report on the Budget 2017 Consultations](#) (Recommendation #52, p.35); Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services [Report on the Budget 2016 Consultations](#) (Recommendation #30, p.31)

² British Columbia Parks and Recreation Association. *Burden of Inactivity*. Retrieved from: <http://data.injuryresearch.bc.ca/sports/subsite/activities/pages/BCRPA/BurdenOfInactivity.pdf>

RECREATION & TOURISM BENEFITS: Tourism is a major driver of BC’s economy. In 2016, the tourism industry generated \$17.0 billion in revenue – a 7.9% increase over 2015, and a 39.3% increase from 2006. In the same year, tourism contributed \$7.9B to BC’s GDP, more than any other primary resource industry (mining: \$4.1B, forestry & logging \$2.0B, and agriculture & fish \$1.5B), with the exception of the oil & gas extraction industry (\$8.2B).³

The role that our parks and protected areas play in BC’s tourism economy is significant. Many of the marketing campaigns used by Destination BC to promote the province draw heavily on imagery from BC’s provincial parks and protected areas. Additionally, **research has demonstrated that protected areas can generate up to eight times the return on investment from visitor spending⁴ making it a low-cost, high-return investment for the province.**

MATCHING FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN NEW PROTECTED AREAS

Governments across the country are currently collaborating to meet Canada’s targets for biodiversity conservation, which includes the goal of protecting 17% of lands and inland waters by 2020. To support this, in 2018 the federal government created a \$1.3B fund that provinces, territories, and Indigenous governments can access for the purposes of creating new protected areas.

Committing additional one-time resources in Budget 2019 for the purposes of meeting these targets was most recently supported by a resolution from the Union of BC Municipalities, which called on the province to:

“...set aside dedicated funding for the purposes of system expansion, ecological monitoring and research, and management planning to meet the quantitative and qualitative measures set out in Target 1 of the Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada, using a participatory and collaborative process that appropriately recognizes Indigenous rights and responsibilities to land and community stakeholders, including municipal governments, in the spirit and practice of reconciliation.”⁵

With a number of protected area proposals already underway in the province, including Canada’s newest National Park Reserve in the South Okanagan, and recognizing the economic opportunity and value of these new protected areas, we strongly recommend the province take advantage of this time-limited opportunity to access federal funding to support on-the-ground action in BC.

³ Tourism Industry Association of BC. *Value of Tourism 2016 Snapshot*. Retrieved from

<http://www.tiabc.ca/advocacy-policy-development/bctourismatters/tourism-by-the-numbers/>

⁴ *The Outspan Group Inc. for the Canadian Parks Council*. (2011). *The Economic Impact of Canada’s National, Provincial & Territorial Parks in 2009*. Retrieved from: <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/cpc/economic.php>

⁵ *2018 UBCM Annual Convention - Resolutions Decisions*, Resolution B108

Recommendation #2: *Commit a one-time investment of \$100M in Budget 2019 for the purposes of creating new protected areas in BC, in order to access immediately available matching funds from the federal government's Nature Fund.*

CPAWS-BC would like to thank the Committee for their time and consideration to of our recommendation that will return financial, social and environmental benefits to the province and the people of BC.