

Reference: 372664

March 12, 2021

Louise Pedersen, Executive Director
Outdoor Recreation Council of BC and Co-Signers
Email: louisepedersen@orcbc.ca

Dear Louise Pedersen and Co-Signers:

Thank you for your letter of February 4, 2021, addressed to the Honourable John Horgan, Premier, regarding the annual budget for BC Parks. As Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, I am pleased to respond on behalf of Premier Horgan.

Our government has consistently placed a priority on our world-renowned parks system. In 2017, the Province increased funding for provincial parks by \$35 million over three years. In addition to this new \$35 million in funding, the Province has undertaken a five-year plan to invest up to \$22.9 million to add over 1,900 new campsites. The province invests \$13.98 million into our parks system capital infrastructure annually. In addition, capital funding for backcountry facilities has also been increased over the last four years. Furthermore, in 2020 the province provided additional funding to support park operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, including an additional \$5 million in stimulus funding to support more capital investment in parks and support BC's economic recovery efforts.

As you've noted, the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged B.C. residents to get outside and recreate in their local parks, which has led to unprecedented visitor attendance in some areas. Making accessible and high-quality camping opportunities available to British Columbians continues to be a priority for our government. It's for this reason that we have committed to expanding B.C.'s popular provincial parks by creating new campgrounds, trails and protected areas, while increasing funding to improve infrastructure and protect park ecosystems. To assist in consultations and planning for these commitments, Premier Horgan has appointed MLA Kelly Greene to work with me as Parliamentary Secretary for Environment. I look forward to advancing that part of my mandate. While final budget decisions will not be known until budget day in April, I very much appreciate your suggestions and rationale and have taken them into serious consideration as we prepare our plans.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,
George Heyman
Minister

cc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier