



Protecting Canada's national parks for future generations

November 2012

This year's federal budget cut \$30 million annually from Parks Canada's budget, putting the future well-being of our parks at risk. There has also been a growing trend over the past two years of inappropriate tourism and recreational developments within our national parks, threatening ecosystems within their borders. On the positive side, progress continues to establish new national parks. However, there are still 11 parks to be established, to complete the national park system, and continued investment is required.

To protect our parks and continue progress to complete the national parks system, CPAWS recommends that the federal government invest \$70 million per year in our national parks, and renew the focus on protection of their ecological integrity as the first management priority.¹

Federal budget cuts imperil our national parks

This year's federal budget cuts to Parks Canada have resulted in shortened visitor seasons and reduced services in many national parks. This will have a negative impact on Canadians who wish to visit their parks, and on Canada's tourism industry and the jobs and communities it supports. For every dollar the federal government invests in national parks, \$5 flow to the Canadian economy.²

The cuts also put park ecosystems' health at greater risk, due to the reduced science capacity to protect them. A year ago, the Globe and Mail lauded Parks Canada's ecological science and monitoring program as our latest export, noting that the U.S., South Korea, Finland and Australia were all adopting Canada's practices. With the Agency's science capacity reduced by 30%, our global leadership on park management, and the future of our parks, is at risk.

Inappropriate infrastructure developments threaten national parks

In addition to this year's federal budget cuts, CPAWS is concerned that a growing trend of inappropriate tourism and recreational development within our national parks is threatening their ecological health. We are also concerned that these developments will do little to foster a deep appreciation among visitors for our parks' special natural qualities.

¹ An investment of \$50 million per year is needed to protect and restore the ecological integrity of our national parks. A gradual increase in investment over 5 years, starting with \$10M in 2013-14 would be one option for reinvestment. To create new national parks, an investment of \$20 million per year on-going, plus a one-time \$50 Million investment in land acquisition and other establishment costs is needed. For more information, see the Green Budget Coalition's 2013 budget recommendations at www.greenbudget.ca.

² Canadian Parks Council (2011) The Economic Impact of Canada's National, Provincial and Territorial Parks in 2009, <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/cpc/economic.php>

Just over a decade ago, a blue ribbon group of experts -- the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks -- advised that virtually all of our national parks were being degraded, and made a suite of recommendations to reverse this trend. This resulted in a renewed focus on protecting national parks' ecological integrity as the first priority, supported by scientific research and monitoring. The recent shift towards more infrastructure development threatens to put our parks at risk again from commercial development and inappropriate use.

Inappropriate development decisions within the past year include the approval of potential large scale summer use of Banff's Mt. Norquay ski area, heightening risk of harm to important summer habitat for grizzly bears and other wildlife; a massive new glass and concrete viewing platform for Jasper National Park; and a decision to allow proposals to re-build a long-closed downhill ski area in Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park.³

Progress should continue to create new national parks

CPAWS has welcomed the significant progress by the federal government in the past five years in creating new national parks, delivering on the 2011 Speech from the Throne commitment to create "significant new protected areas". We look forward to continued progress towards completing Canada's national park system. CPAWS is working to support a number of new park proposals, including in the South Okanagan-Similkameen, Flathead Valley and northern regions of BC; Thaidene Nene (the east arm of Great Slave Lake) NWT; the Rouge National Urban Park, ON; Northern Bathurst Island, NU, as well as the Mealy Mountains NL.

National parks are a source of pride for Canadians

Canada's national parks are among the greatest in the world and have been a source of pride for Canadians for over 120 years. Ten of our 44 national parks are recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These important sanctuaries serve a critical role in protecting nature, and in providing benefits such as clean air and water to Canadians. Our parks also support Canadians' health and well-being by providing opportunities to connect with nature, and offering respite from busy, urban lives.

What you can do:

Support a reinvestment in our national parks, with a renewed focus on protection of their ecological integrity as the first management priority, as well as the completion of the national park system.

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³ For more details see CPAWS' 2012 Parks Day Report which highlights the threats facing Canada's Parks, http://www.cpaws.org/uploads/pubs/parks/cpaws_parksreport_2012.pdf