

NATIONAL PARKS—ENTRANCE FEES—COMPLAINTS FROM  
RADIUM AND INVERMERE REGARDING REDUCED BUSINESS  
REVENUE—HONOUR SYSTEM FOR THROUGH TRAFFIC

**Mr. Howard Johnston (Okanagan-Kootenay):** Madam Speaker, a few days ago I asked the minister responsible for our national parks a question. It was prompted by representations made by people living in the towns and villages of my constituency and concerned the new fee schedule which has been posted for the national parks. Of course, this question had been raised indirectly a little while before I asked it; it was raised in the grievance period, following committee of supply proceedings similar to those of today.

At that time the minister replied by saying that the new policy is designed to have the users pay for the parks; he quoted a figure. As I recall, he said that 5 per cent of all Canadians used the parks. That figure may sound good; it may sound plausible, but if one examines it one will see it is fallacious, because there are no large national parks close to the large population centres of Ontario and Quebec. On the other hand, in British Columbia, some national parks straddle the Trans-Canada highway and I suggest that park users in British Columbia constitute a far larger proportion of the population than 5 per cent, a proportion larger probably than that of any province except Alberta, which is in the same position as British Columbia. Therefore, some of the problems in British Columbia and Alberta are different from those in the rest of the country.

The people who write to me are particularly concerned about the complicated and impractical fee schedule. I do not know what will happen when the summer traffic of July and August hits the national parks gates of Alberta and British Columbia, especially the gates of parks which straddle the Trans-Canada highway. Every car which approaches the park gate will be confronted with six choices, six options, and the people in the car will need to decide, almost instantaneously which of the six choices to make. They must decide whether to go right through or whether to stay one, two, three, four or five days and get a ticket for all national parks for the whole year. It will not be easy to sort out that traffic. I suspect there will be trouble at the gates. There will be increased trouble when the summer flow of traffic builds up. I understand the honour system has already been abandoned. When it was suggested that it would be used, I did not feel it would last a week, I gather it hardly lasted that long.

● (2200)

The other thing about it is that it could well be disastrous to established businesses inside the parks. These people are not consulted when the rules of the game are changed significantly for them. I have received representations, which I have sent to the minister, which indicate that business has dropped off very sharply. I feel the move was made without a clear appreciation of the community nature some of the businesses inside the park have for towns that are a considerable distance outside the park in British Columbia. Meetings of the Invermere-Windermere chamber of commerce are frequently held at the lodge at Radium, inside the park. It serves the role of a community gathering place. With the new fee schedule, every time a person attends each of perhaps five meetings, there is an

*Adjournment Debate*

extra charge that was not there previously because the definition of a user of park facilities is very narrow. If a meeting of the chamber of commerce is held inside the park, those people who would normally simply attend would now become users of a park facility and liable to the extra fee.

I have had representations from the Invermere-Windermere chamber of commerce suggesting that if the fee had to be increased, and realizing the inflationary pressures, it would have been far better to set it at a straight \$5. That would not have necessitated the complicated policing that will be necessary. It would have saved the confusion at the gates and would probably not have had as detrimental an effect on those businesses that are established in the park.

The minister suggested he will try this for a year. I suggest that some of the businesses within the national park could be in considerable trouble if there is no relief and no change. The traffic on the Trans-Canada highway will be badly snarled if there is no provision to review the whole situation before a year.

**Mrs. Iona Campagnolo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Madam Speaker, the minister has to date received only one letter from the Radium-Windermere area of British Columbia concerning alleged decline of business in an operation in Kootenay National Park. This will be answered in the next few days.

The new schedule of park fees was introduced as of April 1. The combined visitation to the park in 1975 for April-May has been below the recorded visitation in 1974 for the same period. Park officers indicate, however, that much of this has been due to the Easter holiday occurring in March this year and because of poor weather during both months.

Park officers indicate that operation of the entrance-way at Kootenay National Park is posing no special problems as a result of the new fee schedule. This is particularly so now that through traffic on the Banff-Windermere highway, which has free passage, is identified by through passes which are temporarily affixed to vehicles.

The intention, of course, is to collect a park fee only from those people who intend to stop and use the park and the facilities in it. Though Kootenay park has posed no special problems, it can be said that fees application in all national parks will be reviewed after the summer season to endeavour to correct any anomalies that may be identified during the main operating season.

I should like to assure the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston), as a person who has enjoyed swimming in Aquacourt at Radium and the various facilities in that area, that confusions and troubles at the gate are not our goal. We seek better parks through public participation, by ordinary people making their acceptable contributions to that park's upgrading program by their monetary contribution when they are in the park.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION—POSSIBILITY OF TASK  
FORCE TO STUDY WAGE POLICY IN ATLANTIC REGION

**Mr. Andy Hogan (Cape Breton-East Richmond):** Madam Speaker, the question that I raised in the House