



Senator D. Ross Fitzpatrick

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# NEWS RELEASE

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Sénateur D. Ross Fitzpatrick

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## **Economic Benefits of National Park Reserve in South Okanagan will be significant, says report**

Osoyoos, BC - A national park in the South Okanagan would produce \$72.0 million in investments, 832 full time equivalent jobs, \$56.3 million in income, \$120.0 million in expenditures and \$39.9 million in government tax revenues, according to a report released today by the South Okanagan Similkameen National Park Steering Committee.

“This study forecasts tremendous economic benefits for the region,” said Okanagan Similkameen Senator the Honourable D. Ross Fitzpatrick, “in terms of new jobs, more investment and increased tourism.”

The study indicates the park could draw as many as 300,000 visitors annually by 2015.’

The report, “Economic Benefits Study, South Okanagan Similkameen National Park Reserve” states that the “multiplier effect” of the proposed National Park reserve could be approximately 7:1 on the local area economy – indicating that a national park would return \$7 to the local economy for every dollar invested.

The SOS National Park Reserve Steering Committee is made up of Okanagan conservationists and is not affiliated with Parks Canada. The committee commissioned the economic report from Land Strategies Ltd., in collaboration with Development Consulting Group.

The proposed park area evaluated for economic benefits includes approximately 35,000 - 40,000 hectares in the South Okanagan Similkameen grasslands. Four municipalities - Penticton, Osoyoos, Oliver and Keremos – four unincorporated towns - Okanagan Falls, Kaleden, Cawston and Olalla - three First Nation communities - Lower Similkameen Indian Band, Osoyoos Indian Band and the Upper Similkameen Indian Band - and a large rural area - are located within a 30 minute drive of the proposed national park reserve and could be economically affected by the proposed park.

The proposed South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve may also have a number of positive impacts on local area First Nations, according to the report. By virtue of their proximity to the proposed national park reserve, it says, the three Bands could all benefit from a national park through investment opportunities, enhancement of existing businesses and job opportunities.

Senator Fitzpatrick also said he was impressed by the rigorous Parks Canada feasibility study currently underway. “The study, due to be released next year, is comprehensive, inclusive and multi-faceted. It is a crucial step in building a consensus to protect this national treasure of biodiversity,” says the Senator.

The report in its entirety can be viewed at <http://www.members.tripod.com/~sonc/>.

The report was not sponsored nor funded by Parks Canada. While some capital cost consultation was undertaken with Parks Canada, the information provided was of a purely conceptual nature and does not reflect what may eventually unfold if the park reserve proceeds.

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