

# A Statement by Canada's Parks Ministers on the Occasion of Their 2014 Meeting



## CONNECTING Canadians with Nature

AN INVESTMENT IN THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CITIZENS

We, the Ministers responsible for federal, provincial and territorial parks, with the exception of Quebec\*, have assembled together to affirm and strengthen the fundamental bond the people of Canada have with nature.

Our magnificent natural heritage forms the foundation of this great country. For generation upon generation, it has nurtured and sustained us, defined where and how we live, and who we are. It has been a unifying feature of our identity, shaping both how we view ourselves, and how others view us. It has been a common source of inspiration, hope and possibility.

As park leaders, we hold in trust, on behalf of the people of Canada, the best of our country's natural places. For over a century, it has been our responsibility and privilege to protect these treasured places, and to dedicate them for the benefit of Canadians forever. We share the mandate, talent, passion and pride in welcoming citizens and visitors from around the world to these majestic landscapes — to awaken wonder, build understanding, create enduring experiences, and nurture a love of and care for nature.

As our society becomes more urban, diverse and sedentary, nature is less present but ever more needed in our lives. Nature supports the growth and development of our children by providing vital places for unstructured outdoor play that stimulate problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking. It supports health promotion through active living for young and old. Our parks are places for families to gather, helping to form the foundation of caring, inclusive and safe communities. They are economic drivers for hundreds of communities across the country, and the backbone of our world-renowned tourism economy.

Working together, and through new alliances with all those striving to improve the quality of life of our citizens, we as park leaders have an important role to play in supporting Canadians' personal and collective well-being by connecting them to nature through their parks.



### Our Commitment

We commit ourselves to sharing a vision, speaking with a unified voice, and leading by example in strengthening the bond that exists between the people of Canada and their natural world, by inviting our citizens to experience, enjoy, value and steward their parks.

We commit to innovating, diversifying and adapting our park offerings to meet the changing needs of families, and to building partnerships to reach people where they live, work and play.

We commit to working across government and with Aboriginal leaders and to collaborating with other sectors of society — educators, health practitioners, community builders, youth leaders, urban planners, tourism operators and others — who are engaged in enhancing our collective health, prosperity, growth and productivity.

We make these commitments on behalf of the people of Canada, who have entrusted us with stewarding the very best of one of our nation's most precious assets — its natural heritage.

\* The Quebec Government does not subscribe to the "Connecting Canadians with Nature" initiative. One of the initiative's main objectives, which consists of improving public health and wellness through outdoor recreation activities and thereby supporting decreased health costs, falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec, particularly in regards to health promotion. However, Quebec will participate in the exchange of information regarding, among others, best practices in park management and promotion.