

Friends of Strathcona Park
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Park Protectors Get Their Day in Court

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A case that could break new legal ground and increase protection for provincial parks in British Columbia is set to be heard in BC Supreme Court beginning on February 4th. Initiated by the Friends of Strathcona Park, the judicial review will challenge the authority of the provincial government to ignore the public interest in preserving and protecting parkland in British Columbia.

“This case is about ensuring the Minister of Environment protects the parks for the good of the public,” says Bridget Horel, a spokesperson for the group. “Allowing a private company the exclusive right to bring horses into a wilderness area diminishes the park for all of us.”

The case revolves around the granting of a park use permit to Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR), an exclusive private resort. In 2011, CWR was granted a permit to bring guided horse trips into a secluded and pristine wilderness area in Strathcona Park. Friends of Strathcona, in seeking to overturn the permit, is asking the court to find that that the government holds these lands in trust for the public and must make these decisions within that framework.

“British Columbians support the idea that the parks are for the general public,” says Scott Bernstein, lawyer for Friends of Strathcona. “No government has the right to give away rights in a park if it is not in the public interest. Granting rights that only one business and its high-end clients can enjoy at the expense of the environment is certainly not in the public interest”

West Coast Environmental Law is supporting Friends of Strathcona by partially funding this legal challenge. “West Coast agrees with the Friends that decisions about what goes on in Strathcona Park, and other provincial parks, need to focus first and foremost on what’s good for the park, and its ecosystems and recreational users, and not on business interests”, states Andrew Gage, Staff Counsel for West Coast.

The judicial review will be heard in Supreme Court in Vancouver from February 4 -8. The public is welcome to attend.

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