

The Heathens Club  
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Oct 2015

Attn: Don Cadden, the Ministry responsible for Parks

Re: Draft volunteer agreement for Crest Creek Crags

Don,

Thank you for your letter and your work on this issue, the club appreciates the energy Ministry employees have contributed to drafting proposed volunteer agreements for Crest Creek. Paul Rydeen notes that despite the Ministry's claims that the process to design the new volunteer agreements was based on extensive public consultation, the Heathens were un-notified when this process was ongoing, despite being one of the most active volunteer groups in Strathcona Park.

Unfortunately, the club received the package late, and this has been a difficult time for me on a personal level, resulting in a tardy response from the club. The club appreciates the Ministry's indulgence in this regard. The club has reviewed the material and has several concerns. It makes sense to address the documents in the order they were presented so we will begin with the cover letter.

- Re: The Cover Letter

Page 1, paragraph 1, last line

The phrase, "... improve upon our existing relationship." Strikes the club as odd... here's why:

- There has been no official relationship since either 2001 or 1995 – The Ministry has yet to decide which.
- ***In that time the club and the Ministry have had exactly three meetings specifically about rock climbing at Crest Creek.***

***Note: Two of the meetings have occurred because the Ministry sought new volunteer agreements.***

- John Put's 2005 proposal for managing climbing at Crest Creek, along with several other documents, were ignored by the Ministry.

Page 1, paragraph 2, line 2

The phrase, "... consistency on how volunteer agreements are managed across the province." reveals a simplistic and ineffective approach to volunteer agreements that lacks reality.

- Re: 'Administration of Volunteer Agreements'

Paragraph 1, line 2

This line is not quite accurate, the club is certainly not 'afearred' of paperwork. Originally, this response had been prepared by hand – not the usual method of the administration phobic! We observe that the Ministry's correspondences contain a disproportionate number of spelling and syntax errors. Perhaps the Ministry should consider writing more correspondences by hand and doing their own editing. What we at the Heathens club **do** object to is management systems that are unreasonably administration heavy, like this one.

- This draft contains fully twice the amount of administration than the previously rejected drafts did.
- There have been several occasions over the decades when multiple volunteers have accrued more than one hundred work days in a year. Is the Ministry really ready and willing to process hundreds of forms annually?
- The Ministry is often guilty of losing these documents anyway.
- The Ministry's goal seems to be deterring volunteers rather than supporting them.
- Is the extra administration added as a punitive response to the club's refusal to sign previous drafts?

- Re: 'The protocol for the 'sign up' of volunteers'

For starters, how about the word 'registration'?

***This process is essentially absurd. In addition to being unreasonably administration heavy as mentioned, it is clumsy and impractical. Clearly none of you have ever done a trailwork project.***

***Here are some questions and issues the Ministry must address:***

- How long prior to the commencement of the project will the multiple individual sign up form be signed?
- It is impossible to reference the specific project in advance for several reasons listed later in this response.
- Would volunteers have to reapply to do work that was not completed on schedule because volunteer turn out or production was below average?
- Why is there no mention of the 'project description form' and other reports in the list of administration steps?
- What is the purpose of the 'project description form' if the intent is to follow the 'Ten Year Plan', which would have already been submitted and approved? Further, in this proposed protocol the project would be described in the 'Ten Year Plan', the 'Individual Services Agreement', the 'Multiple individual sign-up' forms, the 'Project description form' and a safety plan. How does this type of redundancy equate to, "...finding a process to reduce administration of agreements."?

- Why does the ‘project description form’ differ in terms and conditions from the ‘multiple individual sign-up’ form. It would appear that the Ministry is attempting to usurp supervisory power from the volunteer organizers. This would be unwise because Ministry employees are not well equipped to supervise volunteers.
- The club suggested a plan where information regarding the terms and conditions of volunteering in Parks could be posted in the parking lot at Crest. The Ministry responded that there was an element of coercion involved in informing volunteers after they had already travelled to the worksite. In the most recent draft, signing and briefing in the parking lot is offered by the Ministry as a ‘solution’. Why would the Branch reject the club’s suggestion only to trumpet it as a solution later. In light of the Ministry’s track record of flip-flopping, this contradiction raises lots of red flags.
- Does the Ministry really expect the club to manage all this documentation at the parking lot? In inclement weather?
- If volunteers arrive late at the actual worksite we can’t register them without either trekking back to the parking lot or carrying all the documentation all day long, wasting valuable volunteer hours sorting out unnecessary administration.
- How does this proposal accommodate the spontaneous acts of volunteering during climbing days? A considerable portion (on the order of 25%) of all the maintenance completed annually at Crest Creek is done this way.
- How long do all these records need to be kept? Is the Ministry willing to rent the club storage space and hire them a full-time secretary?

- Re: ‘Administration’ (Point 3)

Point three indicates that the club delegate would provide the signed ‘multiple individual sign-up’ forms to the Ministry as late as fourteen days after project completion, however when the club suggested that an injured volunteer simply sign an ‘application for insurance’ form, if you will, the Ministry responded by rejecting the suggestion due to a requirement that volunteers must sign forms prior to commencing work. But how could the Ministry be sure that **any** of the volunteers had signed prior to commencing work given the fourteen day timelag; and if this is acceptable to the Ministry, why did they reject the club’s suggestion?

- Re: ‘Administration’ (Point 4)

Nobody in the club believes that the Ministry is a worthy, long-term agreement partner. We remind the Ministry that a long-term agreement is what we understood to be signed in 1995. What would stop the Ministry (or the club for that matter?) from simply denying the agreement again? The club would need some form of guarantee that the Ministry’s negligence would not be repeated.

- Re: If volunteers refuse to sign the 'registration' form

If a volunteer refuses to sign the form and the Ministry wants to know about it, they would have to be present at the workday because our time will be consumed trying to complete unnecessary paperwork in the mud and rain.

- Summary of 'Administration' section

Clearly the Ministry has no idea how much work is done annually at Crest Creek; how much work is already completed; how much work remains to be done; how much maintenance is required; how much planning is required; the level of expertise necessary; or even the basics of how to build a simple trail! For these reasons the Ministry has consistently under-valued the contributions of Crest Creek volunteers and, despite repeated invitations from the club to help, has failed to orient itself to the area or the project.

For these reasons the Ministry knows virtually nothing about an area it professes to be able to manage. One does not enter into an agreement with a partner who is unwilling or unable to understand the nature of that agreement. The Ministry would have to get up to speed on Crest Creek, and provide some guarantee that they would stay there, before any agreement could be considered. In any case, every person who has read this proposal has found it sluggish, burdensome and redundant, and commented that it seems designed to discourage volunteering rather than support it.

- Re: 'Potential legal costs stemming from Volunteer Activities'

Don, you were misinformed if you were told, "...there are concerns that volunteers may be sued if members of the public are injured when in an area where volunteer work was conducted." ***The club has no idea where this idea originated but it was not a concern expressed by the club at any time:***

- For starters, we know that whatever condition the worksite is in it will be in better condition than it was before the work was done.
- If the Ministry is unconcerned about a hiker suing them over a death trap like the Bedwell trail then we needn't worry about conditions at Crest.

- Re: 'Insurance Coverage'

- ***There is no way to preauthorize work.*** For example: the volunteers arrive at a preauthorized worksite to find that windfalls have fallen there. A chainsaw will be required to clear the debris but no chainsaw work was expected that day. Under this proposal, the crew would simply have to pack up and head home to get permission to use the saw. It makes more sense to simply change worksites or grab the saw. The club has already lost plenty of volunteers to the Ministry's incompetence. Enough!

Note: For more background ask the club about the Kings Peak bridge fiasco of 1994/95.

- ***The coverage amounts are paltry.*** Nobody is going to wade through an unpleasant relationship with the Ministry for these insufficient benefits! The club has conducted thousands of volunteer days in Strathcona Park over several decades without ever opening our first-aid kits

(although I think I saw Paul with a paper bag wrapped around his thumb once) so insurance is not a need we expect to have.

- ***Under this proposal it would be easy for the insurer to deny claimant coverage by arguing that the injurious accident did not fall under 'authorized' work unless every possible act that may conceivably injure somebody that might occur that day is pre-described and approved.*** It is simply impossible to predict or describe every possible activity, but even if it were that would only add immense volumes to the administration load.

***The club still has some trust that the Ministry has no ill intentions in this regard, however we know nothing of the insurer, or future insurers, and their intentions.*** All things considered, most volunteers would prefer to apply for income assistance if they sustain an injury. It's simpler.

- Re: 'The Confidentiality Clause'

- ***The confidentiality clause is counter to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and should be offensive to all Canadians.*** To date the Ministry has demonstrated little integrity so its assurances that the clause is not intended as a 'gag order' offer no solace. The reality is that the clause can be exploited to do exactly that. ***The club reserves the right as Canadian citizens to discuss matters related to our agreements with anybody at any time.***

- Since ***there is no provision in this proposal for dispute resolution*** the ability to subject the behavior of the Ministry to public scrutiny is critical for achieving fair treatment for the club. ***We will never relinquish the right to employ this strategy during the signing of a volunteer agreement.***

- ***Does the Ministry plan on treating the club in a way that they don't want anyone else to know about?*** This clause definitely sends the wrong message to potential volunteers!

Alternatively, we suggest that the Ministry keep sensitive information to itself and refrain from leaking it to volunteers. If sensitive information does somehow get passed on to volunteers, the Ministry needs only appeal to the club's sense of discretion. The club is curious about two things:

- Important information? Don't you guys think you're taking yourselves a little too seriously?
- When would Ministry employees have a chance to leak information to club volunteers? We hardly ever see one!

Mr. Cadden implies that use of this clause would be very unlikely. Good! ***Then strike this unnecessary language from the agreement.***

- Re: 'The Conflict of Interest Clause'

The Conflict of Interest Clause is over-reaching and the language is far too broad.

- The only legitimate conflict of interest concern the Province should have is if a volunteer has a business interest in the area.
- The club is not comfortable with the terms 'construed', 'potential' and 'apparent'. As with the Confidentiality Clause the potential for the Ministry to exploit this clause for purposes other than those intended is too great.

The club realizes that any real conflict of interest between the club and the Ministry is extremely unlikely. Our concern is that the Ministry could exploit these broad terms to terminate agreements citing some 'perceived' or 'construed' conflict of interest. ***It is disappointing that the club's experiences with the Ministry demonstrate that they are not above subjecting the club to unwarranted punitive action.***

- Re: 'Next Steps'

Don, a sensible person couldn't make any kind of decision 'based on the information presented above'. There is very little new information here except a 'whack' of extra paperwork and some vindictive punitive measures. This proposal is merely a regurgitation of documents presented to the club twenty four months ago, so I predict that club volunteers will react the same way. (I refer you to my correspondence of June 2014 for more background).

***You guys did this all by yourselves? And it only took six months? Impressive. The club assumes that since the Ministry has little new to offer that they are keeping the club involved in the process to waste their time.***

- Re: 'Point 1'

It must be noted that the 'Ten Year Plan' for 'Old' Crest Creek is contingent on the Ministry, Phil Stone and Strathcona Lodge arranging a maintenance crew and plan for 'New' Crest Creek. Without a maintenance plan in place for the newer area all volunteer time will be consumed simply keeping 'New' Crest Creek safe for public use. ***Thanks to Ministry interference, come October the 'Ten Year Plan' for 'Old' Crest Creek will already be twenty four months behind schedule.*** With club volunteers getting older every day, one wonders if the Ministry's strategy is to delay the project indefinitely in the hope the club 'diminishes' organically.

- Re: 'Point 2'

A reminder Don, the club operates on very limited volunteer resources and funding so we cannot afford to construct even one extra inch of superfluous trailwork. The Ministry must have nightmares of volunteers obsessively building trail all over the countryside! Look, if the plan refers to 'new' trail it means one of three things:

- A section of trail has become impassible and requires rerouting.

- A section of trail is in a 'primitive' state and requires upgrading to improve safety and/or prevent erosion.
- A section of trail requires a specific repair.

***We take no lessons in trail building from the Ministry. The Ministry knows virtually nothing about the area while their attempts at building trails generally have yielded poor and often dangerous results.*** However, if the Ministry wishes to visit the site to observe we have no objection, but no additional proposals will be prepared for these types of projects because the Ministry's sluggish decision making tends to defeat the purpose of maintenance in the first place and, in any case, they tend to lose the documents.

- Re: 'Point 3'

While the club appreciates the Ministry's offer to provide supplies, ***the offer would have been less 'off the mark' if they had bothered to consult with the club.*** We do not use shovels or mattocks, while snippers are a personal item often purchased 'to suit' (size of hand, strength of spring, etc.). Driving helix spikes up to twelve inches in length requires a heavy hammer with effective shock absorption features that it is doubtful the Ministry could provide (as an ex-carpenter I have provided my own). Later in the proposal the Ministry offers a level one first-aid kit, however the club already has a heavily over-stocked level three kit. We have not (knock wood!) used the kit to date but the club would happily accept additional first-aid supplies for the kit.

If the Ministry had consulted the club we would have requested:

- |                             |               |                       |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| • Pulaskis, handles, wedges | • Nails       | • Fuel, oil           |
| • Wire brushes              | • Rakes       | • Chains, files, etc. |
| • Gloves                    | • Safety gear | • Handpicks           |

***Much more importantly, some consistency in the Ministry's approach would allow the club to seek funding in the private sector.*** Unfortunately, the Ministry's tendency to disappear for decades but then suddenly return bent on new volunteer agreements is, at once, negligent and heavy-handed and a deterrent for potential sponsors.

Of course, the club would be pleasantly surprised if the Ministry met the commitments it made to the club in the '95 agreement, but we're not holding our breath! Conversely, it is offensive that the Ministry implies club volunteers might purloin materials or tools for private purposes, but it's also amusing because the Ministry has provided essentially nothing, leaving us to wonder just what exactly the Ministry suspects the club might purloin?

***The over-riding conclusion of the club is that it might be best if the Ministry refrained from 'helping' altogether as they have proven to be of little assistance in the past:***

- Even though the club has always met their commitments to the Ministry, the Ministry has never met their commitments to the club.
- The Ministry talks a good game, but talk is cheap and the Ministry's actions, or lack thereof, speak more loudly.

- ***It is not beyond the Ministry to promise support that they never provide – in fact the club has seen little evidence to the contrary.***

- Projects seem to go better without logistical support from the Ministry. If the club requires the Ministry's support they will request it.

- Re: 'Point 4'

Don, it surprises the club that you have so little knowledge regarding the nature of trail building and maintenance work! Safety is not administration, safety is an attitude. If volunteers practice poor safety habits, requiring them to draw up safety plans will not change that, ***however the club's enviable safety record over thirty years is a strong indication that the club's safety practices are exemplary.*** The club is committed to safe practices, safety plan or no safety plan. Let us list just a few of the reasons why ***no safety plans will be drafted for any specific volunteer activities:***

- It is impossible to predict what work the club might be doing before the volunteers are tallied, the worksite has been inspected and the final 'micro' route finding decisions have been made, therefore it is impossible to draw up a safety plan in advance.
- Climatic conditions are a large factor and weather cannot be predicted accurately enough to pre-submit a safety plan. For example, if conditions are windy it may be prudent not to work in the trees while cold temperatures may make exposed or higher altitude worksites impractical; rainy conditions preclude the scrubbing of rock routes; and so on.
- The amount of safety equipment or tools that may be required is unknown until the number of volunteers is determined.
- The club cannot predict what aptitudes or limitations may be present in a given set of volunteers. Since some volunteers may be ill-suited for some work venues or activities may have to be changed rendering any submitted safety plan moot.
- Unusual hazards such as stinging insects, aggressive wildlife or a high fire hazard may result in unscheduled changes.
- Changes in venue and activities have often resulted from the theft of building materials and equipment (twice when cedar logs were stolen, and once when Ministry personnel allowed a work crew to use a gabian that was for a specific use). Additionally, the Ministry has removed ropes and equipment fixed for route cleaning, including one occasion when the worker was just eating their lunch!
- Scheduled trailwork days occasionally coincide with extremely unpleasant weather so the work date may be advanced or delayed in the hope more favorable conditions will occur. This usually results in higher quality work, safer work conditions, reduced impacts and happier volunteers.
- Changes in venues or activities often occur when a small group of volunteers is expected but a large group turns out instead. Since this often results in limited supervisory capacity, less dangerous, difficult or technical work than what has been scheduled may be undertaken instead.



- Occasionally the club arrives at a worksite to find the area busy with recreationists. It makes more sense to relocate workers to one of several alternative worksites than it does to displace climbers and other park users.
- Occasionally key volunteers (first-aid, chainsaw operator, supervisor, carpenter, technical climber, etc.) are unable to attend scheduled workdays due to illness, car trouble, or some other unforeseen problem, making a change in venue or activities necessary.
- The club estimates that almost 25% of the maintenance that occurs at Crest Creek is done spontaneously by climbers who take a few minutes out of their day to snip a few leaves or carry a log. It is impossible to predict when this might happen.

The list goes on and on. ***These examples should give the Ministry a reasonable idea why pre-submitted work and safety plans are impractical and unnecessary.*** In any case, the Ministry tends to lose these documents.

Two important points...

- ***It is rather amusing that the Ministry fancies itself expert on safety practices.*** The club has had occasion to work alongside Ministry employees in the past and, with only one exception, they were poorly trained and somewhat obtuse in potentially dangerous situations.

By comparison, Paul Rydeen has experience as a logger and helicopter logger, tree faller and on construction sites, while Chris Barner has experience as a faller, a mountain guide and as a heavy construction supervisor specializing in site safety and high angle and confined space rescue skills. Many of the club volunteers have similar backgrounds. The list of safety suggestions included in the attached documents by the Ministry is quaint and well-meaning but naïve and simplistic. ***With all due respect, we doubt the club has much to learn about safety from the Ministry's desk jockeys.***

- ***Further it should be noted that these changes are usually made with volunteer safety in mind. It only makes sense to change plans when circumstances demand it.*** Unfortunately, this reality does not fit well with the Ministry's request for advance personnel lists and pre-planned sites and activities. If it is the Ministry's position that the club should cancel workdays rather than changing venues the club will most certainly lose many disgruntled volunteers. ***If the Ministry's position is that the club must proceed with scheduled activities in the face of unfavorable conditions will they be prepared to accept responsibility for accidents caused, or caused in part, by those conditions?*** Is the Ministry prepared to insist that volunteers perform scheduled activities even if they are not trained or equipped to do so? ***The proposal is unworkable in this respect and it is shocking that the Ministry has obviously given so little consideration to volunteer safety while drafting this agreement.***

- Re: 'Point 5' The Annual Heathens Alpine (summer) Camp

Apparently, Mr. Cadden has been misinformed yet again. Perhaps I can be of some assistance.

Firstly, the club has never requested an 'annual volunteer work camp' at Crest Creek or anywhere else. Further, the club has never heard of such a thing. However, ***the club does schedule an annual gathering to serve members called the 'Heathens Summer Camp'*** which replaces the 'trip schedules' common to more conventional clubs such as the British Columbia Mountaineering Club or the Alpine Club of Canada

(though these organizations often hold climbing camps in addition to their schedules). These gatherings serve to bring the club's diverse membership together for social and especially educational purposes, by providing a forum for mentoring inexperienced members during supervised trips. Important club policy is often formulated at the camps such as our position on bolting ethics, the planning of new initiatives or the evaluation of possible volunteer agreements. Because club members have unusual work schedules (camp work, fish farms, out of town construction projects, etc.) and live outside the region and country, the summer camp is the only chance the club has to gather.

A little history lesson for you on the real origin of the camp:

- From 1987 until 1992 the camp was known as the 'Alpine Camp' and was held at a backcountry location in Strathcona Park – most often at Bedwell Lake.
- In 1992 the club **hosted 94 members and guests at Bedwell Lake over seven days**. With these numbers camping and crowding impacts were difficult to mitigate.
- In 1993 **Ministry staff (Dave Routledge, Dave Zevick and Niko Weiss) suggested that the club host the camps at the crags** in order to avoid impacts to the alpine. Though reluctant to give up the alpine locations the club agreed.
- By the 1999 camp the club hosted **500 attendees over ten days!** Guiding an average of 50 members daily badly stretched the available club leadership so the Ministry granted our request to extend the camp to sixteen days duration **to allow for leaders to have more rest and preparation days between outings**.
- Since 1999 the club has sought to limit the number of camp visitors **but (since 2000) the camps still average 250 members and guests annually**.
- **The club has never scheduled maintenance at the camp, in fact the exact opposite is true, because the club needs every available day to accommodate the needs of members**. Even foul weather is useful for teaching aid climbing and big-wall climbing skills, rescue techniques, stream crossing and the like.
- The only instance when the club even mentioned maintenance and camping in the same breath was in 2011/12 when Chris Barner had undergone corrective surgery to his hand and Paul Rydeen was suffering from hernia issues. With no chainsaw operators available in the first half of 2012 maintenance went on hold for a while. **That year alone the club requested an additional week camping to save fuel costs while catching up on missed maintenance (Remember the cost of fuel that summer? Camping at the site resulted in several hundred dollars in fuel savings per vehicle)**. The club appreciates that the Ministry granted the extension, but it was a no brainer. **This lone event does not give the Ministry license to try to recreate the past in an effort to redefine the camp or justify punishing hard-working volunteers simply for rejecting an ill-conceived volunteer agreement**.

**The club strongly suggests that the Ministry give this issue the consideration it deserves**. At these camps hundreds of future park users learn low impact camping and climbing techniques, backcountry navigation, respect for flora and wildlife, safe climbing practices, hazard evaluation and myriad other valuable skills. Further, they often become future volunteers and park advocates. **It's plain stupid for the Ministry to reduce the duration of the camps, or forbid them altogether**.

- Re: 'Conclusion'

Sadly the Ministry is unable to simply identify the club's key questions let alone answer them! It is obvious from your suggestions, Don, that you have neither been to Crest Creek or had anything to do with a trail work project. One indicator is that your proposal more than doubles the administration load that was already suggested by other Ministry personnel and rejected by the club. ***The Ministry has regressed from expecting the club to humour employees that know virtually nothing about climbing or the crags to expecting the club to humour an employee who knows absolutely nothing about them!*** This while stating that the Ministry's aim is, "...better understanding the goals we are trying to achieve together." Most people laugh when I read them this statement. ***The club can only conclude (and hope!) that the new proposal has been crafted primarily to mock and insult them.***

- Re: 'Request for Response'

Here is some 'news' for you Don: ***I resigned as liaison between the Ministry and the club in April of 2014.*** I am only acting in this capacity temporarily in order to consider 'modified' agreement proposals at the Ministry's request, presumably because the 'Branch' is struggling so much with the prospect of managing a facility that now attracts up to 10,000 visitor days annually but has no provision for maintenance. I am not happy with the Ministry's treatment of volunteers, however I still harbor enough good will to offer the Ministry some friendly advice...

- First, ***if you really want to build a relationship with the club try using the correct address.*** It was provided to the Ministry in writing in June of 2014, July of 2014 and February of 2015. The club finally received this package by chance on the day the Ministry expected a reply (August 14, 2015) only because I have an old friend who works at the Shoppers Drug Mart post office and recognized my name.
- Next, ***try getting the information to the club's other key people.*** Although they were noted as having been 'C.C.'d on my paper copy Paul Rydeen and others did not receive their electronic version until the club requested one from Arron Miler which was finally sent on August 29<sup>th</sup> – 15 days after the club reply was expected.
- Then the Ministry might consider that ***they took half a year to 'design' a proposal that contains only two new sentences and a few rather unimaginative punitive conditions to distinguish it from previous failures. That's three months a sentence!*** Even if this proposal had any meaningful content the Ministry would still be guilty of allowing the club only a single day to review the material for every month the Ministry required to draft it! ***After all the whining the club has heard from the Ministry about what an overdue priority this agreement is supposed to be, it is shocking that they took all of six months to accomplish essentially nothing.***

The club notes that despite the Ministry's tendency to consider electronic communication more efficient than 'snail mail', the electronic copies arrived even later than the mailed copy! The club concludes that the Ministry finds efficiency challenging in either medium.

After that consider this...

- I have lost much of the function of my hands, cannot work, find it difficult simply to hold a pen, and have been unable to afford food for almost a week due to the modesty of my pension.

- My mother is a stroke survivor who has recently been suffering from relapses and small, but worrisome, bleeds. I am her primary care giver.
- I still run a mountain club complete with educational programs and all, as well as being involved with other volunteer groups and projects.
- I coach
- I have family, friends and a girlfriend.
- I am trying to salvage what I can of my climbing career.
- I am involved with the 'Haig Brown Institute'.
- I have a pet along with other interests and hobbies.
- I am seeking ways to retrain for a new career.

***If the Ministry thinks that I have the extra time to jump to the task, after waiting for them to get organized for almost two years, they've got another thing coming.*** Considering my circumstances the Ministry is fortunate that I have the time to respond at all, let alone act as a temporary liaison. I remind the Ministry that in February 2015 the club requested a brief list of volunteer requirements which the club could then compare to their own priorities; a process the club expected to require a week at most. ***Instead, the Ministry elected to waste our valuable time by dithering for six months before sending us this disappointing regurgitation of previously rejected proposals.***

***Even if club liaisons had plenty of spare time it would still be out of line for the Ministry to impose a deadline on the club's deliberations because entering into a contract of any kind is not to be trivialized.*** This is particularly so when dealing with an untrustworthy entity. In light of this the club will take its sweet time subjecting the proposal to legal scrutiny and determining whether or not the agreement is signable. ***If the Ministry finds this process to be too tedious, the club suggests that they aspire to produce more than one sentence every three months in the future!***

Then there is the phrase, "...sincerely hope we can move forward in a positive manner and continue to work together in the future." Do you really think anybody believes that when they read Ministry correspondences that demonstrate the exact opposite? Most club members respond that if the Ministry is sincere about moving forward they are making an anemic effort of it! How do you sit there and keep a straight face when you write that crap?

***Again, there is no such thing as an 'annual volunteer maintenance camp' no matter how many times the Ministry chooses to phrase it that way.***

- Re: the 'Individual Volunteer Services Agreement'

Climbing Route Maintenance and New Routing

- ***Climbing route maintenance is not a volunteer activity.*** Route Maintenance requires technical skills and climbing expertise that is not common in volunteers.

- **Rock climbing is a sanctioned activity at Crest Creek as per the amended Master Plan for Strathcona Park (2002).** Therefore climbers will continue to make rock climbs at Crest Creek – some will be club members and most will not – but in any case, it would be unwise and unfair to attempt to punish new-routing club members or anyone else simply because they no longer wish to provide the Ministry with free labour and expertise.

***If the Ministry has misplaced their copy of the Master Plan the club would be happy to provide them with one***

- The club notes that the Ministry has not restricted Strathcona’s alpinists despite the use of rappel slings and fixed gear, the trundling of loose rocks and impacts resulting from camps and approaches in pristine backcountry locations with high scenic and wilderness values. Ministry objections to new routing seem hypocritical at the crags where industrial and recreational impacts are already heavy and the area has been prepared to receive recreationists. ***Is it the Ministry’s intention to restrict new routing in all Provincial Parks?***

- The club also notes that there are no restrictions to new routing in Stawamus Chief, Murrin, Bugaboo and other Provincial Parks. ***It would seem that the Ministry has punitively singled out the Heathens club as retaliation for our reluctance to sign what we regard as an incoherent proposal.*** The club’s legal advisors have used the term ‘extortion’ to describe the Ministry’s position that the club must sign the new agreement and continue to provide services to the Ministry at the club’s expense, or lose the right to participate in activities where other groups and individuals suffer no such restrictions. The club wonders if the Ministry treats all long time volunteers in this manner ***or if it is the Ministry’s intention to unfairly sanction the Heathens?***

Additionally, there are some gray areas that require further discussion and definition...

- Some local climbers have begun ‘freeing’ aid climbs at Crest Creek, in some cases adding fixed protection. Would the Ministry consider this activity ‘new routing’ even though the route existed as an aid climb?
- Why would ‘BC Parks’ restrict new aid routes when the activity does not require wire brushing, may not even require fixed protection and causes much less impact than alpine new routing or scrubbing free climbs.
- How would the Ministry view the development of new routes on crags that already have routes on them but still have space for new climbs? Why wouldn’t new routing be allowable on established cliffs?
- It is likely that some climbers will want to climb new routes with or without the Ministry’s permission (particularly if they have no access to information regarding the Ministry’s flip-flop at Crest Creek). After allowing generations of local climbers to new route there, how would the Ministry justify denying the same access to successive generations of climbers? If climbers are denied access to new routing at Crest, will they wind-up climbing somewhere less appropriate?
- Why is the Provincial Government’s policy so out of line with Federal policy and public opinion?

***The club feels that the Ministry's efforts to tie new routing to signing the new volunteer agreement is silly.*** It must be obvious, even to the Ministry, that the climbing must have preceded the agreement or the club and the Ministry would have nothing to agree on! ***The club recognizes these efforts as another one of the Ministry's punitive measures, but it is such a bad idea that it is hard for the club to take seriously – the tendency is to laugh.***

- Re: Page 2, paragraph 2

- ***There will be no time and duty requirements:*** the club will work when its volunteers feel like working – that's what the word 'volunteer' means.

- ***There should not be any 'alternate arrangements'*** because Paul and I are the only certified saw operators and because it would be unwise for some 'B team' to degrade the projects at the crags.

- Re: Paragraph 3

- ***This clause is far too broadly worded and there is potential for abuse on the part of the Ministry.*** The clause is unnecessary anyway because as mentioned none of the club volunteers have any conflicting interests, and the Ministry actually does so little that there is scant opportunity for volunteers to have anything to conflict their interests with!

- Re: Paragraph 4

- This is silly and redundant, and should be covered simply by the term 'volunteer' - look it up in the dictionary.

- Re: Paragraph 5

- ***As the club has often stated, the confidentiality clause has got to go.*** Ministry staff have told the club repeatedly that this clause is unnecessary and can be removed, and yet here it is again. We remind the Ministry that our freedom of speech is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada. Further, based on the club's previous experiences with the Ministry they have no reason to expect fair treatment so the club reserves the right to expose the Ministry's behavior to public scrutiny in the event the club's good faith is abused yet again.

- Re: Paragraph 6

- ***It would be better for the club if the Ministry did not provide equipment or materials.*** No lending of such will be accepted by the club unless it has been requested. The club prefers to provide these items for itself and for that reason accepts only donations of funding. In this way the club needn't concern itself with what phrases like 'reasonable wear and tear' really mean.

- Re: Paragraph 7

There are two problems here:

- ***The insurance benefits are not substantial enough to offset the deterrent of having to deal with the Ministry.*** One would quickly starve trying to survive on these compensations, which generates little incentive to sign. The benefits are proportionately even less useful if the insured was gainfully employed at the time of injury.
- The club assumes that the phrase, “subject to terms and conditions of each policy in force at the time of the loss.” means that policies and even the insurer may change occasionally. ***What guarantee would the club have that the value of the insurance would not decrease during the term of the volunteer agreement, leaving injured club members with even less coverage.***

- Re: Paragraph 8

- ***The club will not allow criminal record checks or security screening unless the Ministry first explains why they are necessary.*** Since when does swinging a Pulaski in the slash require a perfect behavioral record? Since our type of volunteers have no access to Ministry facilities and will not be using Ministry equipment, ***these unnecessary and intrusive checks only serve to discourage volunteering. Strike this rubbish!***

- Re: ‘Project Description Forms’

This form was not mentioned in Don’s cover letter’s explanation of administration. Why? Once again the Ministry chooses a strange way to reach its goal of reducing administration.

- Re: ‘The Map’

Your little map excludes fourteen crags with ninety six established routes on them. Ironically, most of the excluded routes were climbed more than twenty years ago and were well documented in correspondences sent to the Ministry in the last century, then again in 2004. Why didn’t the Ministry reference these documents when creating the map? Has the Ministry misplaced their copies yet again or simply failed to exercise due diligence? Why is the club bothering to send the Ministry these documents if the Ministry is losing or not using them?

Note: wrong address again – 125 B!

- Re: Point 3

Again, ***route scrubbing and maintenance is not, and has never been, associated with the volunteer agreement.***

- The club noted that Paul Rydeen and John Put also have chainsaw certifications for Provincial Parks but are not listed as such in this proposal. Did the Ministry lose these documents as well? Is the Ministry attempting to eliminate Paul and John through exclusion?

- Re: Point 5

***Climbing routes on rock is still not a volunteer activity*** and has never been associated with a volunteer agreement for this reason and others.

With all due respect, the club simply doesn't have the time to run around taking photos for the Ministry. ***If the Ministry requires photos they may take them provided every photographed volunteer has signed a release.***

- Re: Point 6 The Heathen's Summer Camp

***It is despicable that the Ministry would attempt to punish the Heathens by limiting or withholding permission to host an annual summer camp at Crest Creek.*** Why would any volunteer group ever sign on to an agreement with the type of organization that would do that?

- For starters, it is shocking that the Ministry might suggest a small fire! The Heathens club would never permit members to light a fire at the camp or anywhere else in Strathcona Park.
- If the Ministry were to withhold permission for the camps, the net result would be that they would then have to manage less savvy future generations of recreationists.
- The Heathens summer camp is an important annual event in the regional climbing and conservation communities and is part of the fabric of Island mountaineering culture.
- The summer camp is the only scheduled event in the Heathens calendar. Any attempt to discontinue the camp is an attempt to dissolve the club.

***This is a strange way to 'reward' the club for over thirty years of selfless volunteering in Strathcona Park.***

The club notes that despite threatening actions that indicate a desire to dissolve the Heathens, the Ministry persists in pressing the club volunteers to sign a volunteer agreement for Crest Creek. ***(This is no surprise in light of recent changes to section 99 of the societies act.)*** It would seem that the Ministry has no answer to the question of what to do about Crest Creek if the club decides not to maintain the facility. It became obvious this past summer that neither Phil Stone nor Strathcona Lodge will ever be likely to organize a sufficient maintenance program for 'New' Crest Creek. Clearly the Ministry has no idea of the realities of a trail maintenance project, are unaware of the volume and complexity of the volunteer contribution and are not even fully aware of 30% of the existing routes. ***We doubt the Ministry could organize a hot dog at a ball game.***

It should also be noted that the Heathens have been volunteering and advocating for the Ministry since the club's inception forty years ago, and have accomplished as much in Strathcona Park without support as the Ministry seems capable of when using our tax dollars. In fact, the Ministry has become so irrelevant and impotent that the club is unsure whether to respond with anger or sympathy. ***The Ministry's punishment of the club by withholding access to Crest Creek for the camps is short-sighted and numb-minded. The club guesses the camp and its 250 visitors will now have to move back into the alpine!***



- Re: Point 7

The Ministry might as well keep their tools; the club doesn't use them.

- Re: Point 8

It is unnecessary for the Ministry to inform the club that volunteers are not obligated to work or complete tasks. The club understands the meaning of the word 'volunteer' and does not require a redefinition of the term from the Ministry.

- ***There will be no summary of volunteer time.*** A summary would add unnecessary administration to an already administration heavy proposal. Don, you really failed miserably on the administration reduction front.

Here are the club's counter suggestions:

***All the objectives that can be met using a written summary can be more effectively met during proposed on-site meetings.***

- It would be much simpler to view any work completed the previous year during the proposed annual on-site meeting.
- On-site discussions and evaluations are more effective.
- Permission for solutions or new strategies could be granted on the spot.

The proposed summary of all volunteer time is redundant. In any case, the Ministry tends to misplace or ignore the majority of the material that the club sends to them.

- Re: Point 9

There is no need to repeat this. It has been thus from the club perspective for over two decades. However...

- If risk management policies change, the policy in place at the time the agreement is signed should apply.

- Re: Point 10

The key word here is 'guided'. While we expect that our ten year projections are reasonably close, nobody can predict the future. The simple reality is that some work may be required on the spot. If a tree falls across a trail you buck it out, or if something breaks you fix it. If an area begins to get really popular you have to take measures proactively to mitigate impacts.

The club would reserve the right to undertake spontaneous remedial or pre-emptive work when necessary. ***The prospect of having to notify the Ministry for permission is prohibitive because the Ministry's bureaucracy is the least efficient the club has encountered during thirty years of involvement in environmental and recreational advocacy.*** The club is not prepared to wait six months for the Ministry to figure out what's going on and eventually issue an 'edict' to begin work.

More history for you:

Before any of you rookies came on the scene, the Ministry and the club had already concluded that annual 'walk-throughs' were unnecessary. As time passed the Ministry (along with everyone else on the Steering Committee including Timberwest, BC Hydro, Dept. of Highways and many individuals) couldn't be bothered to attend the on-site meetings. Eventually, the club volunteers were the only entity remaining on the Committee. With few exceptions the club has been making unilateral decisions since the late nineties to everyone's satisfaction (as witnessed by 'Adventurous' magazine – fall 2005), including inviting local experts to advise the club on appropriate climbing development sites. ***It is unfortunate that the Ministry chose to forego active participation in the Crest Creek Steering Committee at a time when their input would have been most valued.*** The club submits that since the 'Ten Year Plan' for 'Old' Crest Creek refers almost entirely to terrain already evaluated by the Ministry prior to 1998, any current Ministry participation is largely redundant. The 'Ten Year Plan' primarily documents the club's intent to meet commitments that it made to Ministry staff around the time the first agreement was signed in the mid-nineties.

***It should be noted that annual visits won't even begin to provide Ministry staff with enough information to understand the complexity of the long-term vision required to manage a facility like Crest Creek.***

Finally, with regard to the last paragraph in the section: If the club didn't recognize Ministry authority at Crest Creek they wouldn't have brought rock climbing development there to the Ministry's attention in the first place. ***In November of 1993, while the Ministry had its head buried firmly in the sand over rock climbing in the Park, the club provided a solution and have made the crags viable ever since. The Ministry must recognize in turn that only the Heathens are willing and able to manage and maintain Crest Creek to current levels. The Ministry is helpless trying to organize what the club volunteers have provided for free for decades at the crags.***

- Re: 'Potential Impacts of Project Work'

Aside from fuel or oil spills, which the club has never experienced on any scale, there is no need to identify these impacts because all of them are expected and ubiquitous. However, impacts resulting from work are only half of the equation. The other half is potential visitor impacts. If a climbing area is destined to become popular for whatever reasons there will be visitor impacts. These are impacts associated with a failure to move proactively to mitigate potential high visitation numbers. ***The idea is that minor, temporary impacts resulting from proactive management tend to be dwarfed by long-term major impacts resulting from inaction.*** One decides which impact is potentially greater on the day one concludes whether or not a trail is a suitable development for an area, but there is no need to document the obvious.

As the club has stated, ***cleaning rock routes is not a job for volunteers to be doing.*** This activity requires extensive climbing experience, technical expertise well beyond that required by the average climber, complex and expensive climbing equipment, superior fitness and endurance, considerable funds and gear wear and tear and an eye for line similar to that required for expert photography. ***Considering the Ministry's crippling liability paranoia the club is surprised they would even suggest this activity for volunteers.***

***It is rather shocking that the club should have to point out these important considerations to the Ministry.***

- Re: 'Mitigation of Potential Project Impacts'

Regarding potential new routing restriction, the Ministry has already made it clear that they would prefer to control the expansion of Crest Creek, but that is a foolish notion. Rather, it makes much more sense to allow simple demographics and fluctuations in the popularity of climbing sports to determine the extent of the crags at any given time. ***It is certainly a most grievous error by the Ministry to attempt to associate the climbing of rock routes in any form with volunteer agreements.*** Thousands of climbers all over British Columbia, guides and outfitters, equipment retailers, service providers and thousands of climbing tourists who might otherwise have visited the Province to climb new routes will never accept this, and the recreational tourism sector will suffer as a result.

***The club suggests that while the Ministry is devising ways to single out the Heathens for punishment they would be prudent to give deeper consideration to the more far reaching implications of their actions.***

- Re: 13 'Anticipated/Proposed Annual Costs'

Regarding the info-shelter: the club believes that this structure was offered somewhat in the spirit of a bribe, but would prefer to consider it as an act of good faith. If the Ministry chooses to erect it for either purpose the club has no objections. Unfortunately the club has no use for the tools listed or (as mentioned) the first-aid kit. If the Ministry were to donate the equivalent sum to the club the volunteers could then purchase items that are more relevant to work at Crest Creek, but in any case the club appreciates the Ministry's kind offer.

One piece of advice – do a little research so you can upgrade and update that map before you finalize it for the shelter.

- Re: 14 'Funding Sources'

The club has concluded that Ministry funding is unreliable, and that accepting it would likely result in large volumes of additional administration. One thing is for sure, the club ain't puttin' no cash in the Ministry stash!

***Thanks but no thanks – we'll just continue panhandling!***

***If the Ministry were serious about funding volunteers at Crest Creek it would be as simple as providing a fair, straight forward, long term understanding that would allow local businesses to feel more comfortable sponsoring volunteer activities in Provincial Parks.***

- Re: 16 'Safety Plan'

Firstly, ***it is an incredibly naïve view to think that any amount of diligence, preparation or equipment can, "ensure the safety of all people."***

Next, as mentioned, writing up safety plans in advance is silly, but the club is no longer surprised by what the Ministry suggests. ***Indeed, ideas like these, along with the entry-level list of obvious safety***

**measures the Ministry provided leads the club to believe that Ministry staff have precious little actual experience with dangerous worksites.** That's OK! The club has plenty, as evidenced by their perfect safety record to date over tens of thousands of person-days and more than three decades.

Lastly, **volunteers work alone at Crest Creek all the time** for the following reasons:

- Many jobs are 'one person' jobs, or are more safely or easily performed alone.
- Most volunteer work at Crest Creek is not dangerous to perform alone. **Except when using a chainsaw, working alone is certainly no more dangerous than hiking or climbing alone, and much less dangerous than doing so in the backcountry.**
- Many volunteers prefer to work alone.
- Work partners are not always available.

**However, the club does concede that it may be helpful to have a co-worker watch your back while you are working in case the Ministry attempts to sneak up and stab you in it!**

- Re: 17 'Additional Notes'

There seems to be no end to the Ministry's naivete regarding maintenance at Crest Creek! **There will be no submission of the year's additional plans by March 31<sup>st</sup>** because at least half the time snow cover remains until the middle of March, and in '99 the original parking lot was still deep in snow past the May long weekend! Since it is impossible to predict what remedial projects might be required until the snow melts and all the climbing areas have been inspected, it follows that a work plan that was submitted prior to March 31<sup>st</sup> would be speculative and premature.

**Also, there will be no submission of a summary of the year's work.** If the Ministry requires a summary of this nature they can pay attention to what the club has been doing and write it themselves.

Neither of these proposed requirements were listed in the administration section of Don's cover letter. Why? They represent more unnecessary and redundant administration that the club can only conclude has been 'piled on' primarily to provoke and aggravate them.

- Re: 'The Multiple Individual Sign-up Form'

This is 'hands down', the most awkward title a form has ever had. Once again, the proper term is 'registration'.

Re: Page 2, paragraph 3... "I agree that I will be providing services under the direction of the B.C. Parks Supervisor..." (The club notes that this clause is absent from the 'Individual Volunteer services Agreement' draft. Why?)

**The club volunteers will NOT be under the direction of the B.C. Parks supervisor for several reasons:**

- **The Ministry lacks expertise in trail construction and maintenance and understands nothing of managing a climbing area.**

- **Ministry staff have little experience with potentially dangerous worksites.**
- **Most club volunteers despise the ministry – they volunteer for the Heathens, not B.C. Parks**

Rather it is enough that the club recognizes the authority of the Ministry in Strathcona Park, as stated. As long as Ministry concerns are thoughtfully articulated to the club supervisor there should be no issues, however **the volunteers will be operating under the direction of the club supervisor.**

- Re: The Actual 'Layout' of the 'Registration' form:

To begin with, **the club will not be providing volunteers with a copy of the Individual Volunteer Services Agreement for Crest Creek.** The club is not going to acquire, copy, store, transport and distribute these documents in potential inclement weather! If the Ministry wants volunteers to have this information it can email it to them. This is another case of added, unnecessary, extra, redundant, incoherent administration that was also not mentioned in Don's cover letter.

Additionally, the forms request excessive information, when all that is really needed is the volunteer's name and emergency contact number. Even in the case of the emergency contact numbers, if an accident were to occur, the injured volunteer's emergency contacts would be informed by the club as soon as the volunteers reached telephone range at McIvor Lake. Ministry staff would be notified of the accident early the next business day. **Since the emergency contacts will have been alerted long before the Ministry has become aware of the incident or is in possession of the numbers, there is no need for anybody other than the club to have the emergency contact numbers.** What the Ministry should be concerned with is having the emergency contact numbers of the club supervisors in case the entire crew fails to return from a workday.

Finally, the forms are as ungainly as their moniker, because it is a waste of space to list only three volunteers per page, which exacerbates filing and storage issues.

- Re: Outstanding Grievances

As you have read, the club has many criticisms of the proposed agreement and the attitude of the Ministry, but there are some additional concerns on which the draft document is silent. They are as follows:

- Conflict Resolution

**There is no mechanism for conflict resolution in this proposal other than to grieve to the Ministry. This is unacceptable. A signed proposal would include some method of impartial arbitration. No agreement can be signed that is silent on conflict resolution.**

- Long-term Agreement Status

**There is no mention of the 'Ten Year Plan' or the 'Volunteer Agreement' as a long-term arrangement between the club and the Ministry.** The absence of such language from the original volunteer agreement has been a major contributor to the dispute and denial that has so damaged the current 'relationship'. **The club would require language to this effect to avoid 'Groundhog Day' experiences in the future.**

Also, the club would require several guarantees from the Ministry:

- ***The club would require some guarantee that the Ministry can be relied upon this time around, because during the original agreement they were derelict, and then completely absent, within a few short years.*** As the Ministry's funding dried up staff lost interest in the project and abandoned the club to carry on to the best of their ability. Now the Ministry contends that the agreement was only short term (3 months long – June to Sept 1995) in an effort to conceal their apathy. However, if the Ministry is correct, their negligence becomes even more grievous because that would imply that club volunteers have been working uninsured for eighteen years instead of twelve, and because the Ministry would then have failed to draft agreements for the seventy plus successive three month periods. ***In either of these cases, the Ministry is guilty of terminating the previous agreement without consulting or notifying the club.***
- The club would require some guarantee that they would not have to repeat this process when fresh Ministry employees replace the current ones. Insufficient briefing, coupled with current Ministry staff's tendency to ignore the Craggs and the club, has been largely responsible for the current disharmony between the club and the Ministry.
- The club would require some guarantee that Ministry support for the project would not wane throughout budget cuts or changes of government. The last political changeover was toxic to volunteer organizations associated with the Ministry.

Since the Ministry's track record of honouring agreements is atrocious, the Ministry will forgive the club for not taking them at their word. For this reason any commitments the Ministry makes to the club should be accompanied by penalties for non-compliance. The club reminds the Ministry that they have never failed to meet their commitments to the Ministry, even after the Ministry had been long derelict from the 'relationship'.

Further, the club still has major objections to the behavior of the Ministry and a formal apology will have to be written before the club will enter into any kind of agreement with them. The objectionable behaviors are as follows:

- Ministry staff have denied the original agreement's duration (despite not having been present for its conception or implementation) in an attempt to deflect criticism for negligence.
- Allowing club volunteers to work uninsured for twelve to eighteen years without notification.
- Altering the official minutes of the SPPAC meeting of April 2014 in such a manner as to discredit the club.
- That the Ministry failed to honour even one commitment they made in the '95 agreement (regardless of its duration).
- The way this new agreement was suddenly forced down the club's throat.
- The manner in which the Ministry has alternately delayed the process but rushed the club.
- That the Ministry is attempting to associate new route development and route cleaning with the volunteer agreements.
- The Ministry's lame attempts to describe the club's summer camps as an 'Annual Maintenance Camp' and tie it to the volunteer agreements.

- The Ministry's arrogant tendency to speak authoritatively about a facility and activities they know so little about. It should be an embarrassment to the Ministry that they have no knowledge of the crags despite repeated invitations from the club to...

- Walk through Crest Creek
- Attend the summer camp
- Inform the Ministry with documentation
- Form a strategy for managing climbing at Crest Creek
- Spend a day rock climbing with the club
- Continue annual site meetings and revive the Crest Creek Steering Committee

Finally, the club would require that the Ministry show enough interest to get off its ass and develop a real 'relationship' with the crags and the club. The club would require some guarantee from the Ministry that more than lip service will be contributed this time around.

The club would also require written confirmation of the 'stop work' order verbally delivered by Ministry staff in December of 2014, both for their own records and to explain to Mountain Equipment Co-op and the Climbers Access Society why the club are no longer maintaining Crest Creek (to satisfy the conditions of some \$6,000.00 in grants secured from them for the Hidden Walls Trailhead project of 2004 – 2006 and other purposes).

The club notes that the Ministry seems to be in no hurry to arrange a new volunteer agreement regarding the club's adoption of the Kings Peak trail in 1994 through the same 'adopt-a-trail' program. The club presumes that the Ministry simply forgot they were in that agreement as well. Does the Ministry remember anything it does or is there some type of bureaucratic dementia pandemic infecting the government these days?

## Conclusion

As the club strongly asserted way back in April of 2014, ***there is little similarity between the Heathen's and the Master Plan's vision for Crest Creek and that of the Ministry, but at least we can agree on that.*** Of course it is extremely difficult for the club to walk away from a project that we have poured so much of our lives into (if I'd known, I would have saved my share of the nearly one million dollars of contributions the club invested in the crags and bought some groceries!). Nevertheless, in light of the fact that there is nothing in this proposal to distinguish it from previously rejected ones, the club concludes that the Ministry has no intention of actually negotiating an agreement in consultation with volunteers. Consequently, the club's position remains that it is a liability to be involved with the Ministry that is worth avoiding at any cost.

What is intolerable are the Ministry's disrespectful and unprofessional attempts to offend, insult, punish, provoke and slander the club. The Ministry would do much better to acknowledge that there is no other group or organization willing and able to manage the climbing area at Crest Creek. Instead, their actions have squandered their only opportunity to exert a proactive influence on development at the crags, alienated Island rock climbers and opened a rift between regional recreationists and land managers that will be difficult to bridge.

Even more importantly, regardless of whether or not the club chooses to sign a new volunteer agreement, they are still the same group that has been protecting Park sovereignty, lobbying for restored funding levels, developing first rate recreation facilities, providing consultation and striving to provide the best volunteer services possible with virtually no support. The Ministry should learn to treat these fine citizens with the respect they deserve, not like common vandals. The club should not have to remind the Ministry that choosing not to continue providing free services to the government should in no way diminish the substantial contributions made to Strathcona and other Provincial Parks by club volunteers.

Even though the club has received legal advice that describes the Ministry's actions as coercion, negligence, slander and harassment, as taxpayers the club is reluctant to pursue litigation at this time. However, the Ministry should understand that the club will take whatever steps it can to draw attention to the Ministry's disrespectful treatment of Heathen volunteers, and seek a satisfactory resolution to its grievances.

Though the Ministry's policies and output disappoint the club we will always appreciate whatever effort Ministry staff put into meetings and documents. Despite the adversarial nature of our jobs and positions the club is quite fond of Strathcona zone staff and we wish them well. It will be interesting for the club to observe how the Ministry strategizes the management of Crest Creek, and we wish the Ministry the best of luck with this ambitious endeavor.

This correspondence marks a big change for me personally as I resign from the role I filled for over thirty years liaising between the club and the government. Ronald Reagan was elected president on the day I wrote my first letter to the Ministry! In this century the Ministry has lost its way and billions of dollars worth of Parks infrastructure is at risk, but my hope is that the Ministry will eventually find some way to successfully manage the spectacular legacy of our Provincial Park System.

Yours,

Chris Barner

The Heathens Club