

Butterfly Tours
Sea Kayak Haida Gwaii
Queen Charlotte Islands
British Columbia, Canada



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Gwaii Haanas
Archipelago Management Board

Greetings,

This letter is in response to the request for feedback on the proposed Gwaii Haanas user fee and business licensing fee increases.

As a director of both of the following organizations and with approval of the other elected board members, I write this on behalf of all the members of the Gwaii Haanas Tour Operators Association (GHTOA) and the Association of Canadian Sea Kayak Guides (ACSKG).

I also offer my perspective as the sole proprietor and guide of a small kayak tour business that is licensed to operate in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that I write as an individual kayaker; one who has enjoyed 23 consecutive years of sea kayak touring throughout the southern regions of Haida Gwaii.

We understand the desire to raise fees, yet we strongly object to the sudden dramatic increment of the proposed 100% increase in user fees plus the proposed 233% increase in business licensing fees.

We suggest an increase of no more than 20% per year. A gradual increment in fee increases will allow Gwaii Haanas visitors as well as licensed businesses to adjust comfortably to the higher costs. Frankly, any increase over 20% per year appears as yet another inappropriate cash grab by the Federal Government, targeting the already heavily taxed Canadian public.

There are many aspects of Federal spending which appear to small business owners as incredibly wasteful and poorly planned. This justified perspective, combined with the dramatic proposed fee increases, will only build further resentment toward a Government who seems to not understand or care about the cumulative adverse effects of implementing needless restrictions, regulations and taxations, while simultaneously increasing the operating expenses of small businesses.

The combined impacts of these Government implemented expenses and restrictions have already forced some small businesses in Gwaii Haanas to cease. Other businesses continue to hang on, despite the exceptionally trying times the adventure tourism industry in Canada is currently facing. The world climate for travel has been harshly affected and may take years to recover. Tour operators in Gwaii Haanas are already faced with some of the highest operating expenses in the Province. Insurance costs have skyrocketed, forcing more small businesses to fold and pushing many more nearer the edge of sustainability.

Of course, for a business to sustain itself, costs must be passed on to clients. We have already reached a point whereby potential clients of licensed Gwaii Haanas tour operators are an elite group; the cost of visiting the area is so high that few find it within their budget.

Clearly, the proposed fee increases will adversely affect not only the ability of many Canadians to visit Gwaii Haanas, but also the ability of licensed tour operators to attract clients who are capable of affording the experience.

If the Government truly feels it necessary to raise user fees by 100%, we ask only that the increase be gradually implemented over a minimum of five years.

On page 17 of the Parks Canada publication titled "National Pricing Strategy - 2004/05 to 2007/08 Pricing Compendium" there is a category for Heritage/Tour Operators. The proposed prices in this category include two different sums; one for certified and one for uncertified.

In concurrence with the pricing structure outlined in the above mentioned publication, we suggest that any business that is required, as a condition of licensing, to hire certified guides, boat operators, or pilots etc., should be subjected to no more than a \$100 annual business licensing fee.

Tour operators and guides accept considerable effort and expense in the formation and maintenance of professional associations. For example, the ACSKG created and continues to sustain rigorous certification standards for sea kayak guides. To qualify for ACSKG certification, individuals must first meet several time-consuming and expensive prerequisites, such as advanced wilderness first aid and the successful completion of an endorsed leadership course. Since the standards created by the ACSKG (and other associations) have been adopted by Parks Canada and are a requirement under the conditions of licensing, it is surely appropriate to recognize the significant contributions of these organizations by providing reduced licensing fees to businesses that hire certified guides.

The proposed new licensing fee of \$20 per guide is something that we could live with. However, we have valid concerns that this fee, once introduced, will become dramatically inflated. We seek your assurance that the guide licensing fee will not be increased during the next ten years. Furthermore, we request your assurance that no additional fees will be implemented over the coming decade.

Tour operators and park visitors are all experiencing a significant financial squeeze. We simply seek your assurance that you understand the situation we are in and that you are willing to implement financial management decisions that take our situation into consideration.

We anticipate your reply.

Sincerely,



Gwaii Haanas
Tour Operators Association
www.gwaiihaanastours.bc.ca



Association of Canadian
Sea Kayak Guides
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