

# **Camping Fees: Breaking a United Conservative Party Election Promise**

*April 13, 2021*

2021 Bill 64

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Second Session, 30th Legislature, 70 Elizabeth II

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THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

## **BILL 64**

**PUBLIC LANDS AMENDMENT ACT, 2021**

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THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

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The Government of Alberta has introduced Bill 64, the Public Lands Amendment Act. This Act proposes a new Public Lands Camping Pass. AWA believes this initiative unjustifiably targets low impact users of Alberta's backcountry and will reduce accessibility to public lands for lower income Albertans.

The UCP election platform promised to: "Apply a mandatory \$30 trail permit fee to Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) and camping trailers to pay for restoring and creating OHV trails and preventing damage in Alberta's great outdoors, and to hire additional enforcement officers."

The United Conservative Party's intent to introduce a new Public Lands Camping Pass breaks this promise. "To suggest otherwise," said Ian Urquhart, AWA Conservation Director, "simply misleads the public about what the UCP committed to do in 2019 and what it's doing now."

The government's April 12, 2021 news release states: "This pass was a 2019 platform commitment and was included in Budget 2021 as part of Alberta's common-sense conservation plan." The Party's platform clearly shows the UCP

didn't plan, if elected, to introduce a camping pass that all overnight backcountry users would need to purchase. Furthermore, the measure was not, as far as we can find, discussed in Budget 2021. Budget 2020 stated that a trial \$30 permit fee for recreational trails would be introduced in the 2021-22 fiscal year. It was not described as "a camping pass."

The government's new pass must be purchased by any person, 18 or older, who stays overnight anywhere on public land (outside of a campground, provincial park, national park) in a wide swath of western Alberta. This new fee zone covers all public land west of Highway 22/southwest of Highway 43.

This Camping Pass plan casts a net capturing all low impact users of Alberta's public lands in the Rockies and Foothills. For example, the camping pass map includes Willmore Wilderness Park. Willmore is off-limits to OHV use and is a focal point for backpacking, hunting, equestrian camping, and outfitting. "The government's plan," said Urquhart, "apparently will require all of these user groups to pay fees before entering the Willmore. These low impact users of Alberta's backcountry shouldn't be required to pay a fee to restore the damage to the land OHV use has caused elsewhere in the province."

AWA believes Bill 64 should be withdrawn. The government's commitment to sustainable recreation would be better served by respecting the UCP's promise to electors in 2019.

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