



# BAN MINING IN MANITOBA PARKS!



## PROTECTING PARKS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



**Eric Reder**  
Manitoba Campaign  
Director,  
Wilderness Committee

I first joined the Wilderness Committee because of my concern for Manitoba's provincial parks. I was determined to see our parklands expanded and protected to become one of the best park systems in Canada. But with logging, mining and other industrial developments still allowed in our parks, I knew that these were some of the most endangered parks on Earth. Early in my life, I had opportunities to experience Manitoba's provincial parks. Weekend trips with mom, dad and my brother were commonplace. My first Manitoba tour really sticks with me. One summer, in a ragtag convoy of truck campers, vans and trailers, my extended family wandered around to different provincial parks. We were showing off our province to relatives visiting from Europe, but also seeing a lot of it for the first time ourselves. From the islands of Paint Lake to the sand dunes of Spruce Woods, we absorbed the beautiful nature of Manitoba parks.

I'm sure a majority of Manitobans have fond memories of our provincial parks. Whether it's a brilliant day at the beach, a quiet walk on a forest trail, or a weekend camping with family and friends, time in provincial parks creates positive experiences that we carry with us for a lifetime. Parks are a comfort to us, even if we don't have a chance to visit them. Knowing that there are intact forests, habitat for animals and plants, and clean, fresh lakes gives us solace. **Nature is part of our Manitoba heritage.**

Our provincial parks provide us with a healthy environment. Pure air and clean water don't just happen—they are products of functioning natural ecosystems. Important habitat for animals like woodland caribou and songbirds is also found in our parks, making them a safeguard for biodiversity.



Parks are also part of our legacy. Around the world, parks are a tool used to hold onto nature and wilderness. Preserving and protecting our natural environment is our responsibility to future generations. In 1990, the Manitoba government—like governments around the world—committed to protecting 12% of our lands from industrial development.<sup>1</sup> By 2007, however, scientists had realized the 12% goal wasn't enough, and instead determined we need to protect AT LEAST HALF of the boreal forest region.<sup>2</sup> Today about 10% of Manitoba is protected.<sup>3</sup>

In 2008, the Wilderness Committee celebrated with Manitobans as the provincial government announced new legislation that would ban logging in most parks. However, even with this ban on commercial forestry, our parks are still being damaged by industrial activity. While there are currently no active mines in Manitoba parks, there are many mining claims and there is ongoing damage from mineral exploration. New mining claims are continually being staked even as the rehabilitation of former mine sites is ignored.



This educational report looks at where mining activities are happening in our provincial parks and how badly our parks are being put at risk and damaged. Learn what you can do to keep mining and other industrial activities out of our provincial park system.

**The Wilderness Committee has set an ambitious goal for Manitoba—to protect 20% of our province by the year 2020.** That's because we believe that our provincial parks should be a protected areas network. Provincial parks that are fully protected are what all Manitobans deserve.

Photo top: **Whiteshell Provincial Park** (SharedVisionPhotography.ca | Mike Karakas), above: **Woodland caribou** (Art Wolfe), left: **Black-throated green warbler** (Edgar T. Jones).

# HOW MANITOBA GAVE PARKS THE SHAFT

## A HISTORY OF MINING AND PROVINCIAL PARKS

While provincial parks are now such a valued part of our Manitoba culture, that has not always been the case. Legislation to create provincial parks was only proclaimed in the 1960s, with Whiteshell being one of the first parks created. At that time, the importance of protecting wild and natural areas from disturbance was not fully accepted, so logging and mining were still allowed in parks.

The wilderness we now know as provincial parks was first accessed by roads and trails built to get to the timber and minerals found in the area. As more people began exploring these new roads and trails, they began to appreciate the natural beauty and wanted these areas preserved for recreation.

Even in the 1990s, when a new Provincial Parks Act was created, the Manitoba

government enshrined logging and mining as acceptable activities in parks.<sup>4</sup> This was in spite of great public interest in preserving the park areas and even a Clean Environment Commission recommendation to phase out industrial activity in all parks.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, Canada established the world's first national park system in 1930 and banned mining in national parks at that time.<sup>6</sup> Here in Manitoba, we have been left with a relic from a bygone age—the idea that industrial activity is acceptable in a park.



Photo: Abandoned core sample box in Grass River Provincial Park.

# WHICH PARKS HAVE MINING ACTIVITY?

Out of Manitoba's 86 provincial parks, 13 have mining activity such as exploration and staking, as shown on the map in the center of the page. The parks which are at greatest risk are Nopiming and Grass River, where a multitude of mining claims are located and ongoing exploration is occurring right now. Some of the smallest parks,

such as Sasagiu Rapids and Pisew Falls, are completely covered by mining claims, while Whiteshell only has a few smaller claims.

The legislation of a past era created this conflict in our provincial parks. The longest-standing claims in a provincial park are 1921 claims from Grass River, but a majority of claims have been

staked in the last few years, meaning there is an ongoing threat to our parks. There are currently over 750 mining claims inside provincial parks in Manitoba.<sup>7</sup>

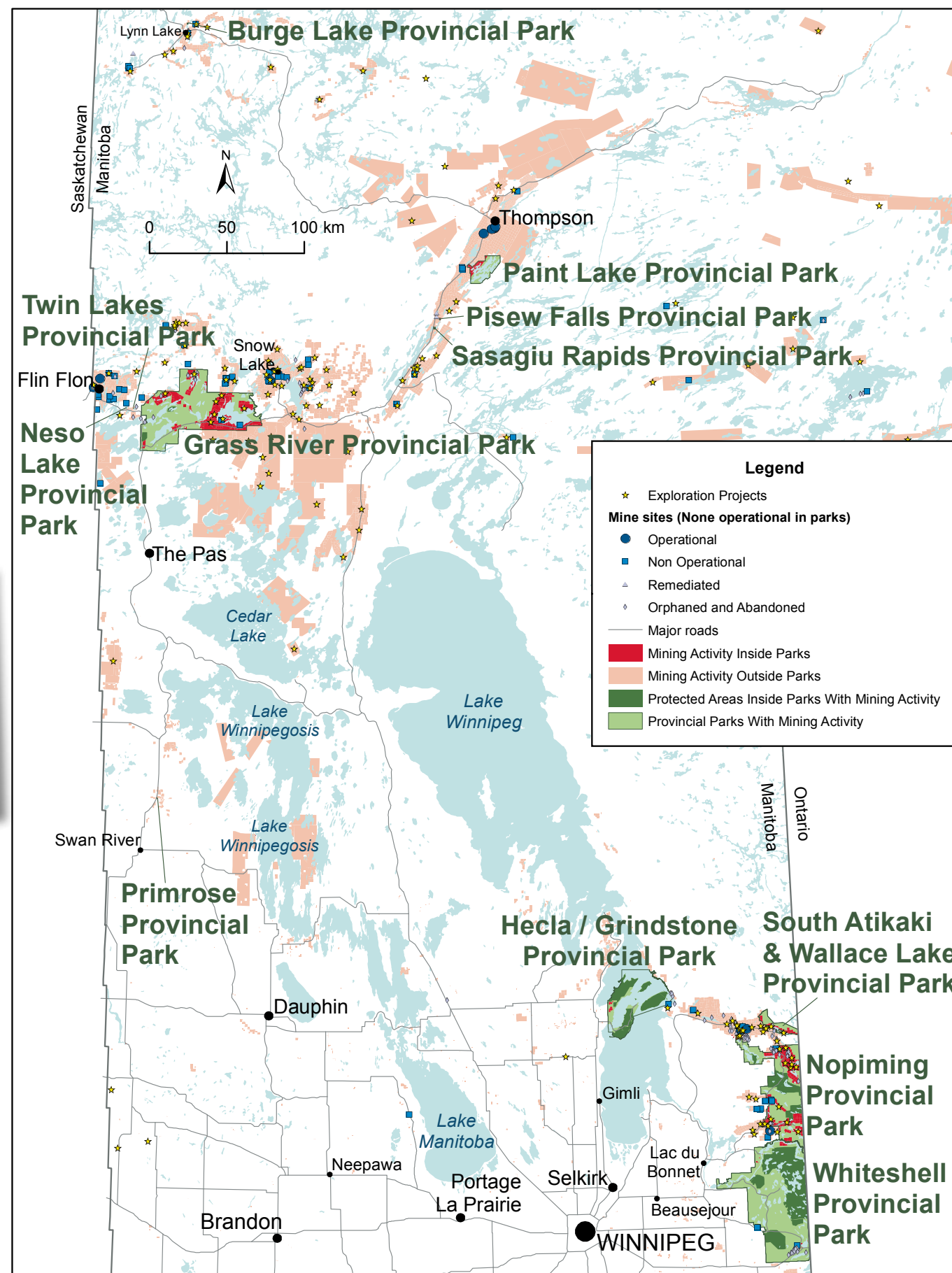
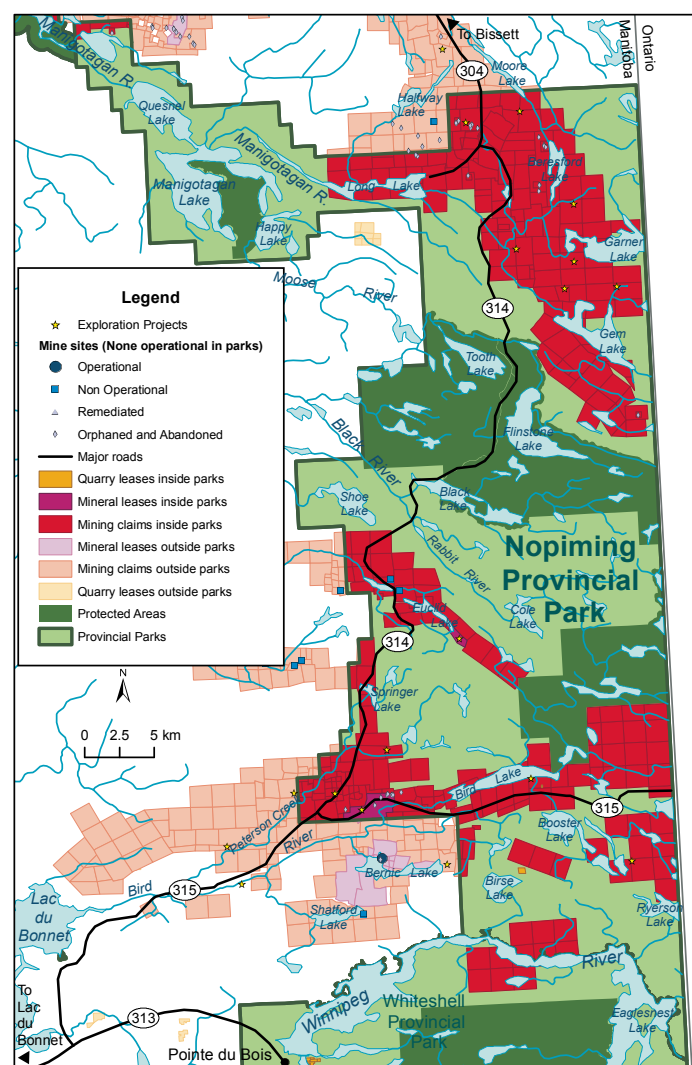


Photo: Exploration road bulldozed in Nopiming Provincial Park.



Photo above: Yellow warbler (Robin and Arlene Karpan), left: Moose and calf (Wayne Lynch).



# WHAT'S AT STAKE:

## IMPACTS FROM MINING AND MINERAL EXPLORATION

There is no way to mitigate the fact that operating a mine is a dirty, destructive business. When land and rock is disturbed, heavy metals that are contained in the rock are exposed, and can cause contamination and acidification of local water and lands.

Fresh water and a variety of chemicals are used in the mining process, which requires the creation of ponds to hold

contaminated liquids. Many mines are located below the water table, so mines need to be continually drained, making acid rock drainage a serious concern.<sup>11</sup>

The process of mineral exploration itself, before a mine is even permitted or proposed, is also harmful to the ecosystems our provincial parks are supposed to be preserving. Exploratory drilling operations require roadways to be bulldozed to transport equipment, and these trails have a terrible impact on wildlife in Manitoba.

The moose population in eastern Manitoba has plunged by at least 50% in the last several years.<sup>12</sup> One of the causes of this decline is the exploration roadways, which make it easier for wolves to hunt moose. These

trails also allow human hunters easier access deep into the forest, which is threatening moose numbers.

Every Manitoba park is designated

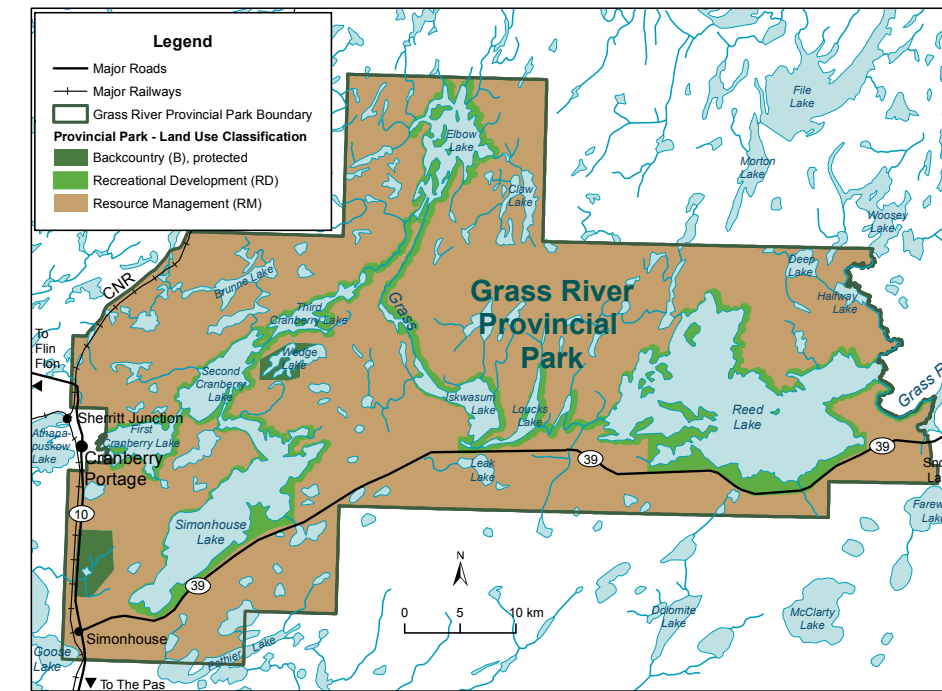
to provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities and experiences in a natural setting.<sup>8</sup> If this is the purpose of parks, how is mining allowed?

as one of six Land Use Categories (LUCs). Wilderness, Backcountry, and Heritage are the only three LUCs that offer protection from development. Access and Recreation Development LUCs are used for park infrastructure and roads, plus cottage and camping areas, and don't necessarily exclude mining. The last LUC, Resource Management (RM), is the real problem as it allows commercial resource development and extraction—logging and mining.

# A PARK THAT ISN'T A PARK

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION CREATES INDUSTRIAL PARKS

Manitoba's Provincial Parks Act states that the purpose of a park is: "to conserve ecosystems and maintain biodiversity; to preserve unique and representative natural, cultural and heritage resources; and



# CLAIMING OUR PARKS

## HOW PRIVATIZATION OF OUR PARKS HAPPENS

There is a straightforward process to establishing ownership of mineral deposits in Manitoba. For a small fee,

a person can purchase a Prospecting License, which allows them to stake a claim to minerals on land in

Manitoba.<sup>19</sup> In order to keep the claim each year, a person must do some exploration work on the property or pay a small fee. As long as exploration work is continuing, or a fee is being paid, a claim does not expire.

This simple process was designed to encourage exploration of new areas, when development of resources was considered the best possible use of the land.

Nowadays, the value of unimpaired nature is recognized. In parks, this claim process hampers our ability to manage wildlife and protect nature. Essentially, it allows private control over designated public lands.

For advanced exploration such as drilling, more permits are required. But there is no public oversight on where development can occur—not even in a provincial park. In the spring of 2011, a mineral exploration road was quietly bulldozed through the Springer Lake Proposed Ecological Reserve in Nopiming, an area that was supposed to be protected from development.



Photo: Mining claim post in Whiteshell Provincial Park.



Photo: Dragonfly on Blue Flag iris.



Photo: Contaminated water in Grass River Provincial Park.

has been closed since 1993. There is still an eerily bubbling water pond devoid of trees and vegetation on the site, and open stretches of ground with strange, crystalline build-up—a testament to the lasting impacts of mines.

# DIGGING OURSELVES OUT OF THIS HOLE

THE SOLUTION TO GET MINING OUT OF OUR PARKS

Our parks can only be preserved if mining and other industrial activity is banned. There is a simple path forward for Manitobans—a solution to gain protection for our provincial parks while still allowing the mining industry to resolve their mining claims.

The first step is to ban all new mining claims in provincial parks, just as the Manitoba government has recently done for quarry leases for peat under the Save Lake Winnipeg Act.<sup>14</sup>

For claims that currently exist in our provincial parks, a five-year time limit must be imposed, allowing a claim owner to complete exploration and produce a mine proposal. If after five years no mine proposal is produced, then the claim expires. For the claim owners that do come up with mine proposals, the government should first look at buying out or expropriating the claims. If that can not be accomplished, then the area should be deleted from the park boundaries and

the park enlarged in other areas to compensate for the loss of land.

A key step towards real park protection is to pass legislation which removes the Resource Management Land Use Classification from our Provincial Parks Act.

This proposal to end mining in parks is a fair, responsible solution that is good for Manitobans today, and for future generations. Ecologically responsible projects can proceed, while Manitobans get the provincial park protection they deserve. The Manitoba government already bans mining in all new provincial parks. Now it's time to move out of the past and ban mining in all parks.



Photo's above: Fishing and paddling are favourite park activities.



Photo above: Canoe expedition in Nopiming Provincial Park, right: Pine grosbeak (Don Johnston).

## TAKE ACTION!

You have the power to give our parks the protection they deserve.

The most important step you can take to protect our parks is to write a letter to our elected officials. Tell them if you think mining and mineral exploration should be banned from our parks.

### Contact information:

Premier Greg Selinger,  
204 Legislative Building, 450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0V8  
E-mail: premier@leg.gov.mb.ca  
Phone: 204-945-3714

Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh,  
330 Legislative Building, 450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0V8  
E-mail: minconws@leg.gov.mb.ca  
Phone: 204-945-3730



Photo: Boreal owls (Wayne Lynch).

## REFERENCES

- <http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/annual-reports/soe-reports/soe93/parks.html> and <http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/pai/commitment/index.html>
- <http://borealbirds.org/resources/SciencelLetter-English.pdf>
- Manitoba government news release, April 20, 2012 - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/04/2012-04-20-141000-13796.html>
- The Provincial Parks Act of Manitoba, Section 7(3)(c) - <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p020e.php>, <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/39-3/b003e.php>
- Report on Public Hearings, Abitibi-Price Inc. FML #01 Forest Resource Management Plan 1991 - 1998, The Manitoba Clean Environment Commission February, 1992
- [http://www.pc.gc.ca/apprendre-learn/prof/itm2-crp-trc/htm/evolution\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/apprendre-learn/prof/itm2-crp-trc/htm/evolution_e.asp)
- Based on Wilderness Committee research and mapping from the Manitoba Government Mines Branch GIS Map Gallery, Mineral Dispositions maps.
- The Provincial Parks Act of Manitoba, Section 5 - <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p020e.php>
- A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks - [http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/parks/pdf/planning/manitoba\\_parks\\_system\\_plan.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/parks/pdf/planning/manitoba_parks_system_plan.pdf) (p 38)
- Prospecting license process - <http://www.manitoba.ca/iem/mrd/busdev/exp-guide/registered.html>
- <http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/annual-reports/soe-reports/soe91/mining.html>
- Manitoba government news release, January 20, 2012 - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/01/2012-01-20-140700-13048.html>, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2010/05/2010-05-27-153500-8666.html>
- Manitoba government news release, January 20, 2012 - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/01/2012-01-20-140700-13048.html>
- The Save Lake Winnipeg Act, Section 8 - <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/39-5/b046e.php>

WildernessCommittee.org/Manitoba • 1-800-661-WILD (9453)

## YES! I WANT TO HELP BAN MINING IN PARKS!

Enclosed is:  \$25  \$50  \$100  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Fed. reg. charity #11929-3009-RR0001

I want to become a member! Enclosed is my annual fee for a:  
 \$52 Family Membership  \$35 Individual Membership

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
PROVINCE \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

The Wilderness Committee is Canada's largest membership-based wilderness preservation organization.

**clip**  
And return to the:  
Wilderness Committee  
P.O. Box 2205,  
Station Terminal  
Vancouver, BC V6B 3W2

**call**  
1-800-661-9453 toll-free  
anywhere in Canada

## CREDITS

**Writing and Editing:** Eric Reder, Derrick O'Keefe, Matthew Sasaki.  
**Graphic Design and Layout:** Perry Sky Jack, Sue Fox.  
**Mapping:** Geoff Senichenko  
**All photos:** Eric Reder unless noted otherwise.

**Wilderness Committee, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2012.** Canadian Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 0900567. Posted in Vancouver for free distribution. Printed in Canada on recycled newsprint with vegetable-based inks.  
**Press Run 25,000** © Wilderness Committee 2012. All rights reserved. Written material may be used without permission when credit is given.

Published by  
**Wilderness Committee — National Office**  
P.O. Box 2205, Station Terminal  
Vancouver, BC V6B 3W2  
T: 1-800-661-9453

**Wilderness Committee — Manitoba Office**  
3rd Floor — 303 Portage Ave., Winnipeg MB, R3B 2B4  
T: 204-942-9292 F: 204-942-8214

[facebook.com/WildernessCommitteeManitoba](https://www.facebook.com/WildernessCommitteeManitoba)  
[twitter.com/WildernewsMB](https://twitter.com/WildernewsMB)

