AN ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL PARK POLICY
OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

CYNTHIA DIANE HAWKSWORTH
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ABSTRACT

In 1965, the provincial government of British Columbia established the legislative authority for a system of 28 regional districts to provide a vehicle for local public input in land use planning and co-ordination of the activities of the various government agencies administering resources and services in an area. The Regional Park Act, also adopted in 1965, permits these regional districts to undertake responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of regional parks, that is, quasi-natural, user-oriented, and easily accessible recreation sites, intended primarily for the use of residents of the region. Interviews with provincial officials and examination of some of their public statements suggest that there are two provincial objectives regarding this act:

1. To provide accessible recreation opportunities.
2. To reserve land to be developed as regional parks in the future.

The purpose of this study is to assess the present regional park policy of the provincial government in terms of the goals for these parks, and to discover factors which have contributed to its apparent lack of success. In addition, an alternative policy which might better meet these objectives and methods for its implementation is proposed.
The appropriateness of the objectives for regional parks, however, is not examined.

The analysis consists of an examination of a two-fold hypothesis:

1. Regional governments do not become involved in the development of regional parks because they are not politically motivated to do so. The relatively small size of most regional districts' populations, limited urbanization, and the general rural or undeveloped character of the regional districts do not create a demand for such parks. In the majority of the regional districts, special circumstances do not stimulate regional action.

2. Although regional districts use fiscal restraints as a justification for not undertaking the regional parks function, financial limitations are not a prohibitive barrier to the development of regional parks.

The methods of investigation employed were a questionnaire survey of representatives of the 28 regional districts, a further survey of the secretary-treasurers of five regional districts, and a case study of the process by which the North Okanagan Regional Board decided to undertake responsibility for regional parks in 1974.

It would appear that the existing regional park policy of the Province is inadequate to meet these objectives. By December 1973, only seven of the 28 regional districts had assumed the regional parks function for all member areas and only five others had adopted it for part of their area. Furthermore, of 23 regional governments who responded to a request for information on progress made in relation to regional parks, only four have established more than two
parks. The remainder have either not adopted the regional parks function, remain at the stage of planning for the development of parks, or maintain only one regional park.

The results of the investigation indicate that the absolute and relative costs of regional parks are small. Fiscal limitations, therefore, should not and do not constitute an absolute barrier to regional district involvement in the regional park function. Thus, there must be some other reason for the regional governments' lack of interest in regional parks. Three alternative explanations are proposed and examined. The evidence indicates that the basis of regional districts' apathy is that residents of these regions simply do not feel that these parks are important enough to spend tax money on. Thus, if the provincial government wishes to ensure that land is set aside for future regional parks, it must, itself, take responsibility for preserving these lands. The regional governments could then assume the responsibility for the lands when they are politically motivated to become involved in the regional parks function.

A two-pronged regional park policy is, therefore, recommended to the provincial government.

1. The provincial government should take responsibility for preserving parkland to meet future demand for regional parks. Although some legislative tools for implementing this policy already exist, there is a need for coordination and organization.
2. The provincial government should smooth the way for those regional governments which become interested in involvement in the regional parks function.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction: The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the British Columbia government's present policy towards regional parks in terms of the provincial goals for these parks, and to discover factors which have contributed to its apparent lack of success. In addition, I will suggest an alternative policy which might better meet these objectives, and determine methods of implementation. However, the appropriateness of provincial officials' objectives for regional parks will not be examined.

Regional parks bridge the gap between local municipal parks and provincial parks, in that they are larger and less developed than local neighbourhood parks, while containing less primitive facilities than provincial parks (Ahrens, 1973; Matheson, 1973). The parks are "regional" in the sense that they are easily accessible to population centres within the region and are intended to be used primarily by local residents. The Director of the Parks Branch of the British Columbia Department of Recreation and Conservation has indicated that accessibility is a major characteristic of regional parks.

The standards of the significance of natural attraction or "unspoiledness" can be relaxed for the utility value of nearness to people (Ahrens, 1970, p. 2).
For provincial parks, by contrast, nearness to local residents is less important, as they are intended to serve a much wider population.

Regional parks are user-oriented, rather than resource-oriented. The type of facilities found in a particular regional park varies according to the recreational needs of the residents of the area.

Greenbelts, viewpoints, woodlands and shorelands, where trail walking, picnicking, group camping, and other pursuits tied in with aesthetic enjoyment of the natural scene are possible, beaches and environments desirable in a Regional Park System (Ahrens, 1970, p. 2).

Parks similar to British Columbia's regional parks have been developed in other parts of North America (Denver Council of Governments, 1968; Morgan, 1967; Underhill, 1970). The style and degree of development varies considerably among these parks. For example, regional parks in Los Angelos County in California are only slightly less developed than large municipal parks (Underhill, 1970), while parks under the authority of the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority are generally set in rural landscapes, take great advantage of natural setting, and provide facilities for activities such as bathing, boating, fishing and hiking (Morgan, 1967). However, the various agencies administering these parks uniformly state that they fill a perceived void between municipal and provincial, or state, parks.
A description of the institutional arrangements developed by the provincial government for regional parks, and for regional districts, which have responsibility for these parks, is included in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Chapter 3 outlines the provincial officials' goals for regional parks and discusses the two hypotheses to be tested by the analysis. These are—that regional governments do not become involved in the development of regional parks because they are not politically motivated to do so, and that although regional districts use fiscal restraints as a justification for not undertaking the regional parks function, financial limitations are not a prohibitive barrier to the development of regional parks. The results of the investigation of these hypotheses are described in Chapter 4, which includes an examination of the regional districts' involvement in the regional parks function and the economics of regional parks. In Chapter 5, an alternative provincial policy for regional parks is suggested and methods for carrying out this policy are discussed.

Several sources of information were explored in this study. Interviews with representatives of the provincial Parks Branch and the Department of Municipal Affairs, and Parks Branch records provided insight on the institutional arrangements for regional parks and the goals which the Province perceives for these parks. Data accumulated on the regional districts of the province by the Department of
Municipal Affairs served as a second information source. A questionnaire survey of regional board chairmen and secretary-treasurers of all twenty-eight regional districts in the province and the planning directors of the eighteen regional districts employing planning staff was conducted in December 1973. (A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix.) This survey provided further understanding of the characteristics of regional districts administering regional parks. It also offered data on problems which regional governments perceived in developing these parks, and the type of assistance desired from the provincial government.

A response was requested from more than one representative of each regional district because, for example, the planners' answers to some questions might be quite different from those of the secretary-treasurers, who are more concerned with the regions' over-all budgets, or the elected chairmen, who might be more conscious of their responsibility to local residents. Because questionnaires were sent to all of the regional governments in British Columbia, I did not face the problem of designing an unbiased sampling procedure. However, despite the inclusion of stamped self-addressed return envelopes with each questionnaire, no response was obtained from representatives of five of the 28 regional districts, so the sample may not be entirely free of bias.

In order to obtain a fuller understanding of the economics of regional park development and administration than
could be provided by the results of the questionnaire, the secretary-treasurers of the regional districts of Alberni-Clayoquot, Cowichan Valley, East Kootenay, Greater Vancouver, and Mount Waddington were requested to forward financial data. These particular regional governments were selected because they have been involved, to different degrees in the development of regional parks. This data is presented in Chapter 4.

Finally, a case study of the process by which the North Okanagan Regional Board decided to undertake responsibility for regional parks in 1974 was conducted. This study, based on structured interviews, provided information similar to that offered by the questionnaire survey. It was hoped that, because the case study offered more detailed information about one regional district, it would provide a check against the hazard of superficial responses often associated with questionnaires as a research methodology.

Because information obtained from interviews is subjective and influenced by individual perception, I spoke with several Regional Board members, appointed staff, and a number of residents of the North Okanagan Regional District. While the specific wording of questions varied, all respondents were asked to comment on the same issues in the same order. The files of this regional district also provided useful information which supplemented the interviews.
CHAPTER 2

The Institutional Arrangements for Regional Districts and Regional Parks in British Columbia

The Regional District Concept in British Columbia: Legislation and Objectives

In 1965, the provincial government of British Columbia created the framework for a province-wide system of "regional districts." The legislative authority for the regional districts was established under the Municipal Act, which states as follows:

On the recommendation of the Minister, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council may, by Letters Patent, incorporate any area of land and the residents therein into a regional district for the purpose of carrying out such functions as may be granted from time to time under this section or conferred by this Act (Municipal Act, 1965, Part XXIV, d.2 s. 766).

The locations of the twenty-eight regional districts established under this Act are shown on Map 1.

The Municipal Act further states that each of the incorporated regional districts will be administered by a regional board. The municipal councils of unincorporated communities within the regional district appoint members to this board, while the unorganized areas elect representatives to it directly. The voting strength of each board member is proportionate to the size of the population represented (Municipal Act, 1965). The population of the member
area is divided by a "voting unit", the size of which is specified in the Letters Patent (Collier, 1970).

One of the primary goals of the provincial government in establishing the regional district system was to increase local public input in rural planning. It was believed that the consensus of the people and the unique physical and social characteristics of each area would be reflected by an accessible regional government. In addition, the flexibility which the Act provides regarding the particular functions to be adopted, the benefiting area within the region, and financial arrangements would permit regional boards to respond to the unique conditions and goals of the different areas in the province (Department of Municipal Affairs, 1971).

A regional district function is:

... any object, power, or duty or group of objects, powers, or duties, or both ... granted to that region (Municipal Act, 1965, s. 765). The majority of the functions are adopted voluntarily by the regional district. The necessary powers for performing a function are granted by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council by supplementary Letters Patent.

Regional districts may undertake a variety of functions under their Letters Patent, including ambulance service, airport facilities, air pollution, recreation facilities, refuse disposal, regional parks, sewers, water, and the operation of wharves. There are, in addition, certain
statutory functions. As a result of legislation introduced in 1967, the responsibility for hospitals was placed at the regional level under Regional Hospital Districts, to be administered by the same board as the corresponding regional district. Furthermore, in 1970 the Province assigned the following functions to the regional districts by statute: regional and community planning, building inspection, contract services, local works and services, and grants-in-aid (Municipal Act, 1970).

The entire regional district doesn't necessarily have to adopt any one function. Where the benefit of a service is limited to a particular area and group of people within the region, the Regional Board may adopt that function for that designated area only. Examples of functions which have been adopted in this manner by some regions are ambulance service, fire protection, garbage disposal, and regional parks. The Regional Board may also provide some services, such as engineering and planning services for municipalities, and the provision and maintenance of an equipment pool for data processing, on a service or contract basis.

Although the Municipal Act places the responsibility for community and regional planning, and the administration of services at the regional level, the legislation did not directly affect the control of the natural resources in the province. The various provincial resource departments, such as Lands, Forests and Water Resources, Recreation and Conservation, Agriculture, Health, and Mines and Petroleum
Resources, retained responsibility for the administration of the natural resources in the regional districts (Rees and Karlsen, 1972).

Unlike the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, regional districts in British Columbia have no taxation authority. They obtain the major part of their revenue by billing member areas. Following approval of the budget by the Regional Board, each benefiting member area is billed a proportionate share of the cost of each service provided to it. The municipal portion of the cost is included in the budget of the member municipalities, while the revenue from the rural areas is recovered by means of the provincial property tax (Department of Municipal Affairs, 1971). In most cases, costs are divided on the basis of real property assessment values taxable for school purposes (Department of Municipal Affairs, 1971). Section 766 (1973) of the Municipal Act stipulates that regional districts may requisition a maximum of two mills for any one function and a total of three mills for all of the functions assumed, without holding a plebiscite. If the electors agree, however, the regional governments may make larger requests (Moore, 1974).

Under the terms of the Municipal Finance Authority of British Columbia Act (1970), a regional district is able to undertake long-term borrowing for capital projects. The Authority may issue and sell debentures under its own name
and lend the proceeds to the regional district for the financing of projects which have received the approval of the Inspector of Municipalities (Moore, 1974).

A major objective of the regional district system has been the co-ordination of activities of various governmental bodies administering resources and services in the rural areas of the province. In the past, these agencies rarely consulted one another. As Rees and Karlsen (1972, p. 4) observed,

... traditionally the "comprehensive approach" to planning has been limited to urbanized areas, while rural areas were merely "serviced" by senior government agencies and departments.

The isolation of the departments from one another and from the rural population contributed to the development of a rather restricted view of problems. This fragmented approach to planning is characteristic of governments which are organized on the basis of departmental specialization. Typically, this approach views reality as the composition of a number of discrete facets, and fails to recognize any interrelationship between the various systems which make up the human and physical environment (Sewell, 1971). The provincial government believes that, by providing a vehicle for the exchange of information between different agencies, regional government would stimulate a more organized approach to planning in rural areas. To ensure that consultation did occur, Technical Planning Committees, composed of the regional district planners and
field personnel from the provincial natural resource departments, were established for each of the regional districts in the province. The two functions of the Technical Planning Committees are to advise the regional boards and to take responsibility for two-way communication between provincial departments and the local areas (Collier, 1970).

The regional board members and regional district staff have felt that, due to a lack of interest on the part of the resource departments, these committees have not succeeded in providing sufficient exchange of information and plans (Moore, 1973). The apathetic attitude of these departments is shown by the fact that many field representatives rarely attend the meetings of the Technical Planning Committees (Moore, 1973). The attitude of the provincial departments towards regional planning was clearly shown at a meeting of representatives of these departments and regional district officials held in 1971. Speeches presented at that meeting by representatives of the resource departments indicated that they believed that the regional districts' function was to support provincial policies. The value of regional districts as a means of providing co-ordinated planning responsive to local needs was ignored. D. Borthwick, Deputy Minister of the Lands Service, for example, stated,

... I can see no reason why the regional districts cannot develop policies and by-laws regarding rural land management that have a degree of uniformity and at the same time fall within the scope of provincial policies (Regional District Conference, 1971).
It would seem, therefore, that if the regional districts are to succeed as a means of providing organized planning in rural areas, the provincial resource departments must reconsider their attitude towards regional government.

Regional Park Legislation in British Columbia

The spatial distribution of the population of beneficiaries has traditionally been the guiding principle in issues regarding the assignment of responsibility for services among different levels of government (Margolis, 1968). Thus, because regional parks are primarily intended for use by local residents rather than by the population of the Province as a whole, the provincial government feels that the responsibility for their costs and administration should rest with the regional governments (Ahrens, 1974; Matheson, 1973).

The establishment and administration of regional parks is one of the voluntary functions which the Municipal Act permits regional districts to acquire. The terms under which the regional park function is adopted, and regional parks are administered are stated in the Regional Parks Act, which is considered an extension of the Municipal Act (Regional Parks Act, 1965, s. 7).

The procedure by which a regional district obtains the regional parks function is similar to that employed with respect to other regional functions. The regional district
acquires the regional parks function by requesting the Lieutenant-Governor to include it in the Letters Patent. The powers which the regional district obtains following the adoption of the function are extensive, and include:

(a) the acquisition of land for either a regional park or trail,

(b) passing regulations for the management, operation and control of a regional park or trail,

(c) admission charges for entrance to the park or any of its facilities,

(d) leasing property in the park for a concession or another such commercial enterprise,

(e) construction and maintenance of buildings or other improvements in the regional park,

(f) acquisition of land by lease agreement, as long as the lease is for at least twenty-one years (Regional Parks Act, 1965, s. 5).

The only responsibility placed upon the regional district by adoption of the regional parks function is the preparation of a regional parks plan within five years (Regional Parks Act, 1965, s. 18). The definition of an official plan is sufficiently flexible so that there should be no difficulty in its development. The Act states that,

... a regional park plan may be expressed in maps, plans, reports, or by other means, and may be a general scheme, without specific detail, indicating present and projected regional parks (Regional Parks Act, 1965, s. 18).
As with other functions, the entire regional district need not adopt the regional park function. The Regional Parks Act states that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council delegates the responsibility for regional parks to a "Regional Parks District", the boundaries of which may or may not follow those of the regional district. The Act permits two or more member areas to petition the Lieutenant-Governor to be incorporated as a Regional Park District. Other member areas may later become part of the district. Moreover, two regional districts may co-operate in the development of regional parks (Regional Parks Act, 1965, s. 3, 4).

As has been stated, regional districts obtain some of their capital by billing the member areas. The maximum annual requisition which a regional district may requisition for regional park purposes is

\[ \text{amount equal to the product obtained by multiplying one mill by the value of taxable land and seventy-five percent of the value of taxable improvements for the purpose of levying school rates in the immediately preceding year, excluding all the property of the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority (Regional Parks Act, 1965, s. 10).} \]

Initially, the Act prohibited the regional districts from undertaking any long-term borrowing to pay the capital costs of regional parks. In March 1972, however, the Act was amended to permit regional districts to borrow up to

\[ \text{ten times the product obtained by multiplying one-half mill by the assessed value of the land and seventy-five percent of the value} \]
of taxable improvements for the purpose of levying school and hospital rates (Regional Parks Act, 1972, s. 11).

While provincial officials believe that the responsibility for regional parks should rest primarily with the regional governments, they perceive some justification for provincial involvement, as the establishment of a regional park in one regional district may generate certain spillover effects for the rest of the province. For example, the psychological benefit received by residents of one region as a result of accessible parkland is also of some value to the mental health of the province as a whole.

Furthermore, the development of regional parks by regional districts would assist the provincial Parks Branch to define its own function. Three classes of provincial parks have been developed in British Columbia. Although parks placed in two of these classes are administered directly by the Parks Branch, the third category of parks, that is, Class C or community parks, are controlled by unpaid local boards appointed by the Minister of Recreation and Conservation (Regulations for Class C Provincial Parks, Reg. 227, 1967). Class C parks are intended to be used primarily by local residents and do not, therefore, fit the general definition of provincial parks (that is, a park intended for the use of the residents of the entire province and for tourists visiting British Columbia). Moreover, the local park boards have found it increasingly
difficult to cope with maintenance and operation problems resulting from growing recreational demand. These difficulties have necessitated increasing attention from the Parks Branch. For these two reasons, the Parks Branch would be happy to give up responsibility for such parklands. The development of regional parks in British Columbia would permit the phasing out of Class C parks (Matheson, 1973).

To date, the provincial government's involvement with regional parks has been limited to the provision of financial grants to assist regional districts with the capital expenses of securing parkland. A regional district may acquire funds from the provincial government to meet up to one-third of its total park expenditures. To qualify, the region must submit quarterly to the Province a list of land acquisitions contributing towards fulfilling the park plan. In addition, for the first five years, at least sixty percent of the region's park expenses must be associated with land acquisition. Otherwise, the contributions from the provincial government will be based on forty percent of the total expenditure. After the five year interim period, the Province will also assist with development costs of facilities. At no time, however, may the provincial grant be applied to park maintenance costs (Regional District Conference, 1971).

It has been suggested by some representatives of the Parks Branch that the provincial government staff, who are experienced in park planning and development, should provide
technical assistance to the regional districts in planning, establishing and developing regional parks (British Columbia Provincial Parks Branch, 1967). The Parks Branch employs a small staff to maintain contact with the regional districts in the province. However, as a result of other additional responsibilities, these people have had only a minimal amount of time to devote to the regional district's problems (Matheson, 1973). The Parks Branch field representatives on the Technical Planning Committees, as well, are generally too busy with other matters to take much interest in the difficulties faced by regional districts. At present, therefore, most of the regional governments which have adopted the regional park function have received little advisory assistance from the Province (Matheson, 1973).
As Fox (1970, p. 213) states, a planner

... whether in the field of outdoor recreation or in some other field, seeks on the one hand to define what ought to be accomplished, and then evaluates alternative ways of achieving such an accomplishment.

Thus, both the evaluation of existing institutional arrangements and the development of possible new policies, require an understanding of the goals which are to be pursued.

There is no written statement of the provincial government's objectives regarding the regional park concept, and there seems to be some confusion regarding the actual goals of the Regional Parks Act. Nevertheless, interviews with provincial Parks Branch staff and an examination of the Branch's records suggests that the Province has two major objectives relating to regional parks:

(a) To develop parks to provide accessible (i.e. "local in the sense of being near major communities") recreation opportunities to citizens throughout the province, and

(b) To reserve land to be developed as such regional parks in the future.

One of the Parks Branch's justifications for the first of these two goals is that, by offering "breathing space"
away from the pressures of modern living, regional parks are beneficial to the mental health of people in the Province (Ahrens, 1970). Furthermore, provincial officials believe that physically and financially accessible parks are a critical component of any plan to assure adequate recreation opportunities for the poor (Ahrens, 1974).

The basis of the provincial government's second objective for regional parks, that is, the preservation of land for future regional parks, is the belief that, eventually, a greater demand for such parks will develop. The recreation literature of the 1960's is replete with statements concerning the inevitability of a dramatic rise in the demand for recreation facilities, due to population increases, greater amounts of leisure time, more disposable or discretionary income, and better transportation facilities (Underhill, 1970; Clawson and Knetsch, 1966). In the past, it was generally believed that, due to a trend towards urbanization, and a desire to escape from the pressures of urban growth, the "recreation explosion" would lead to an increase in the demand for less accessible undeveloped areas and the "wilderness experience". It was thought that people leading an increasingly regulated life would be anxious to escape to an area which retained a primeval character. While the value of such wilderness areas cannot be denied, recent events have indicated that the forecasted "recreation explosion" may have a rather different focus from that
which was previously predicted. Rapid increases in the prices of such essential items as food and clothing imply that people may not, in fact, have significantly greater amounts of money to spend on luxury items. Moreover, the present world-wide crisis in the price of energy resources indicates that mobility may be restricted in the future. It is logical to expect that if people cannot afford to make use of the more primitive undeveloped parks, regional parks, which provide a pleasing, quasi-natural, and accessible environment, will be more highly valued. The Parks Branch recognizes that these factors may make regional parks much more significant to the total British Columbia parks system than was previously imagined (Matheson, 1973).

Furthermore, provincial officials believe that population growth is inevitable in British Columbia. Bob Williams, the provincial Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, has stated that, while a massive move to B.C. such as was experienced by California during the last century is unlikely, a gradual "drift west" across the country can be expected. He indicated that the government hopes to accommodate much of this population increase in satellite towns in the Fraser Valley, in existing municipalities on Vancouver Island, and in the Interior and Northern portions of the province, through a policy of encouraging industrial decentralization. (Farrow, The Vancouver Sun, 1974). The Director of the Provincial Parks Branch, Robert Ahrens
(1974) has stated that the land for accessible regional parks to meet the expected increase in demand should be secured before this population growth occurs, as, later, it may be pre-empted for other uses or priced out of the market (Ahrens, 1974).

A two-fold hypothesis is employed to investigate the apparent inadequacy of the existing policy to meet the provincial objectives regarding regional parks.

1. Regional governments do not become involved in the development of regional parks because they are not politically motivated to do so. The relatively small size of most regional districts' populations, limited urbanization, and the general rural or undeveloped character of the regional districts do not create a demand for such parks. In the majority of the regional districts, special circumstances do not stimulate regional action.

2. Although regional districts use fiscal restraints as a justification for not undertaking the regional parks function, financial limitations are not a prohibitive barrier to the development of regional parks.

As was previously stated, provincial officials believe that since these parks are intended to be used primarily by local residents, the regional districts should bear the largest part of the cost of the regional parks function. While it is possible that more non-residents than local people visit the regional parks, the provincial government's assumption is accepted in the examination of the dual hypothesis of this thesis.
CHAPTER 4

Regional District Involvement in the Regional Parks Function and the Economics of Regional Parks

The hypothesis of this thesis consists of two related premises. It is first proposed that regional governments do not become involved in the development of regional parks because they are not politically motivated to do so.

Data compiled by the provincial Department of Municipal Affairs indicated that, by December 1972, seven of the twenty-eight regional districts in British Columbia had undertaken the regional parks function for all of their member areas and five others had adopted it for part of their area (Department of Municipal Affairs, 1973). However, no information on the amount of progress made by regional districts in establishing regional parks had previously been collected. For this reason, the questionnaire survey of the secretary-treasurers, planners and chairmen of regional districts included a question on the progress made in this regard. Representatives of regional districts which had undertaken the regional parks function were also asked to indicate the date of its adoption.

Regional Involvement in the Development of Regional Parks

In Table 4.1 the twenty-three regional governments from which at least one response was received have been grouped according to the steps which have been taken to either adopt
the regional parks function or develop regional parks. As the table shows, twelve of the twenty-three regional districts have considered adoption of the function at least once but did not assume it (respondents were permitted to determine the definition of "considered"). Seven of the regional district representatives stated that their region had, in fact, considered undertaking this particular function "many times" or "a number of times". Four respondents indicated that the regional board of their regional districts were presently considering the function. It can also be observed from this table that five of the nine regional districts which have adopted the regional parks function have not progressed beyond the stage of developing one park.

Table 4.1
Extent of Regional Districts' Involvement with Regional Parks
(December 1973)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps Taken</th>
<th># of Regional Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Considered Adoption of Function</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Considered Adoption of Function at Least Once, But Did Not Adopt It</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted Function but Still at Planning Stage</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established One Park</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established 2-5 Parks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established More Than 5 Parks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Regional Districts Responding</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4:2 shows that, as might be expected, the regional districts which have made the greatest progress in establishing regional parks have had the function for the longest period of time. However, three of the regional governments which have had the function for several years are either still planning for parks or have established only one park.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Adoption</th>
<th>Planning Stage</th>
<th>1 Park</th>
<th>2-5 Parks</th>
<th>5 Parks</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965-1968</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-1971</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it would seem that, since many regional districts have not adopted the regional parks function and regional governments are slow to establish parks, the present provincial policy has not succeeded in meeting the two provincial objectives regarding such parks; that is, to provide nearby public recreational opportunities and to reserve land for future recreational demand.
Figure 4.1 shows the relationship between the population size of regional districts, as recorded by the Department of Municipal Affairs (1973), and the progress which has been made in establishing regional parks. As can be seen, there is no correlation between the number of people in the regional district and the steps taken to develop regional parks in the sparsely populated "rural" regional district. However, the populations of the two regional districts which have made the greatest progress in establishing regional parks are much larger than that of any other regional district. This indicates that there may be some population threshold level at which the regional government begins to perceive nearby recreational needs as more important. These data suggest such a threshold may exist between 60,000 and 220,000 people.

"Urbanization" may be defined connotatively in various ways, according to the purposes of the writer. A definition may focus on a demographic, economic, or socio-cultural dimension of city life. In this analysis, a demographic concept of urbanization has been employed. Stone (1967) states that, from a demographic viewpoint, an urban area is a densely built-up area, and an urban population consists of the residents of such areas. I have, therefore, measured the urban population of the various regional districts in British Columbia on the basis of population density and the proportion of the residents living within incorporated municipalities of at least 1000 people.
FIGURE 4.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULATION SIZE OF REGIONAL DISTRICT AND PROGRESS MADE IN ESTABLISHING REGIONAL PARKS (1973)

Steps Taken 5+ Regional Parks

2 - 5 Regional Parks

1 Regional Park

Planning Stage

Considered Adoption of Function

Never Considered Adoption of Function

Population

20,000 40,000 60,000 80,000 100,000 120,000 140,000 160,000 180,000 200,000 220,000

900,000 1,000,000 1,100,000 1,200,000
The results of this examination do not suggest a relationship between the progress which a regional district has made in establishing regional parks and the degree of urbanization, as it has been defined in this investigation. As Figure 4:2 indicates, regional district involvement in the regional park function does not necessarily increase as the proportion of the population residing within incorporated municipalities rises. Moreover, Figure 4:3 shows that there is not a clear relationship between the population density of the regional district and the steps which have been taken to develop regional parks. Nevertheless, a further investigation, which considered socio-cultural and economic differences, such as those which may be observed between the metropolis of Vancouver in the Greater Vancouver Region and the small town of Coldstream in the North Okanagan, might yield different results.

Officials representing regional districts having the parks function who responded to the questionnaire survey were asked to indicate factors which they believed contributed to its adoption. The responses to this question have been compiled in Table 4:3. Because some respondents listed more than one factor, and others omitted this question entirely, the percentage of responses do not add up to 100 percent for each respondent group.
Figure 4.2: Relationship between proportion of population of regional district residing in incorporated areas and progress made in establishing regional parks (1973).
FIGURE 4:3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULATION DENSITY OF REGIONAL DISTRICTS AND PROGRESS MADE IN ESTABLISHING REGIONAL PARKS (1973)

Steps Taken

- 5+ Regional Parks
- 2-5 Regional Parks
- 1 Regional Park
- Planning Stage
- Considered Adoption of Function
- Never Considered Adoption of Function

People Per Square Mile
Factors Contributing to Regional Board Decisions to Adopt the Regional Parks Function (Number and percentage of each respondent group who represented a regional district having the parks function and who cited the factor as an influence.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing Factors</th>
<th>Secretary-treasurers</th>
<th>Planners</th>
<th>Chairmen</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Financial Assistance</td>
<td>2 (66%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (16%)</td>
<td>5 (31.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortage of Undeveloped land for recreational use</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (31.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Circumstances</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five respondents believed that the financial assistance provided by the provincial government under the existing policy influenced the regional government in its decisions on regional parks. However, five other officials stated that their regional district had adopted the function because rising land prices and an increase in the number of subdivisions, private recreational developments and industrial development was leading to an increasing scarcity of undeveloped land. These results suggest an explanation for the weak relationship between the population size and urbanization of a regional district, and the progress which has been made in developing regional parks. It is possible that
the extent to which the pattern of settlement pre-empts suitable public recreational land, rather than the actual population size or the degree of urbanization stimulate regional action on this matter.

As the results contained in Table 4:3 also showed, five respondents believed that their regional districts had adopted the parks function in response to special circumstances (for example, the donation of land or a strong interest group demand). An examination of certain developments in the North Okanagan Regional District demonstrates how special circumstances may prompt regional involvement in the regional parks function.

Several times in the past, the Regional Board of this region investigated the possibility of undertaking the regional park function. Indeed, in 1970, this function was the subject of considerable discussion at Board meetings. Until recently, however, the Board had decided against accepting responsibility for regional parks (Connolly, 1974). Finally, in January 1974, the Board members decided to adopt the parks function and, in March, the Letters Patent was issued by the provincial government (Mackiewich, 1974).

One development influencing the Board's decision in 1974 appears to have been the opportunity to acquire several municipal parks within the region at a minimum cost. The municipal government of Vernon, the largest population centre within the regional boundaries, indicated that it
wanted to transfer the recreation facilities under its control, including parks and beaches, to the regional district, because it found that these facilities were being used by residents of the entire region (Fleming, 1974).

A second contributing development was a Parks Branch offer to transfer Silver Star Park, a Class C provincial park located within the regional boundaries, to the regional district. Silver Star Park is larger than most other Class C parks in the province and contains a commercial ski development within its boundaries. Because the volunteer park board appointed to administer Silver Star faced more complex administrative problems than those usually presented to Class C park boards, the Province was forced to devote considerable time to this park. Furthermore, the expansion plans of Silver Star Sports Company, which operates the ski development in the park, suggested to the Parks Branch the expenses related to the provision of such services as a sewage system and garbage disposal would increase in the future (Matheson, 1974).

A Canada Manpower Information and Analysis Branch study of Silver Star Park found that local and visiting skiers provide well over $4,000,000 annually to stores, cafes, motels, hotels and service stations, and contribute directly and indirectly to the employment of 600 people in the area. The report concluded that the park provides a winter balance to a tourist economy which is otherwise entirely summer
oriented (Appendix to Silver Star Steering Committee Report, 1973). The Regional Board members felt that, in view of Silver Star's economic importance to the region, the opportunity to acquire control over the style and amount of development in the park should not be ignored (Fleming, 1974; Postill, 1974).

Interest group support for adoption of the regional park function appears to have been a third condition which contributed to the North Okanagan Regional Board's decision to undertake the function. In October 1973, the members of the Silver Star Sports Board, who no longer had the time or the expertise to deal with the problems generated by Silver Star Park, expressed to the Regional Board their approval of the transfer of the park to regional control (Davidson, 1974). The management of Silver Star Sports Company, who found provincial restrictions on Class C parks (e.g. park use permits are required for any expansions and no licenced lounge is permitted in the park) hindered attempts to expand facilities and hoped that the Regional District would be more co-operative, also appeared before the Board in support of the proposal (Alder, The Vancouver Sun, February 28, 1974). A final group which expressed support for placing Silver Star Park under regional control was the Silver Star Steering Committee, an organization established in 1972 by the Silver Star Park Board and the provincial government to
... review the function, administration and development of Silver Star Park area and to propose, after inviting a wide cross-section of public opinion, a forward-looking use, development and management policy for appropriate public multi-recreational use of Silver Star Provincial Park (Silver Star Steering Committee, 1973).

In September 1973, representatives of this committee, which consisted of members of several organizations (e.g. the Vernon Motel Association, the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, the B.C. Federation of Wildlife Clubs, the Vernon and District Snowmobile Club, the North Okanagan Naturalist Club, the North Okanagan Regional Board, and the City of Vernon) indicated to the regional board that it supported the adoption of the regional parks function (Regional District of the North Okanagan, 1973). The attitude of each interest group was publicized in both the local Vernon News and the Vancouver Sun (The Vancouver Sun, February 28, 1974; The Vernon News, 1973).

A final circumstance which may have influenced the Board's decision to adopt the regional park function is the possible occurrence of a conflict of interest regarding Silver Star Park. The Chairman and another member of the Regional Board hold shares in Silver Star Sports Company (Clarke, 1974; Laidman, 1974; Fleming, 1974; Postill, 1974; B.C. Parks Branch Files, 1973). It is the opinion of this writer and the Parks Branch (Ahrens, 1974) that these men were not actively promoting the assumption of responsibility for Silver Star Park by the regional district. Nevertheless
it is difficult to believe that their opinion on the question of adoption of the regional parks function would not be affected.

Thus, the results of this investigation have provided some support for the first premise of this hypothesis. The small progress made by regional governments in connection with the regional parks function and the slowness with which regional parks are developed show that these governments are not motivated on this matter. Where special circumstances exist, such as the opportunity to obtain free parkland, or political pressures are felt from special interests or community interests, regional officials are stimulated to become involved in the regional parks function. Otherwise, regional governments do not develop parks until greatly increased population growth, or the particular pattern of land use and resource development make undeveloped potential public recreational land scarce. It is possible that regional governments' interest in regional parks does not evolve gradually, as suitable land is slowly pre-empted for other uses. It may be that this interest arises only when it is almost too late to obtain parkland.

The second premise of the hypothesis examined in this thesis is that while regional officials claim that fiscal restraints are a justification for not becoming involved in the regional parks function, financial limitations don't prevent this involvement.
Investigation indicates that financial problems are used as a reason for not developing regional parks. For example, in the case study of the North Okanagan Regional District, the Regional Board and staff were concerned about the costs generated by adoption of the parks function (Mackiewich, 1974). The Board members were particularly worried about the administration expenses of Silver Star Park (Davidson, 1974; Mackiewich, 1974; and Matheson, 1974). The only other problem mentioned by Regional Board members as hindering involvement in the parks function, was disagreement among Board members regarding the value of regional parks. The representatives of Vernon and Coldstream, the two largest population centres, favoured involvement in this function, as they believed that the municipal parks within their areas were used by residents of the whole region and should, therefore, be financed by the regional governments. However, the Directors representing the smaller municipalities and the electoral areas opposed adoption of the regional parks function, claiming that since the parks under discussion were located in Vernon and Coldstream, they would be used chiefly by residents of those communities and that costs should be borne by them. In fact, these Directors did not feel fully committed to cooperation with representatives of other member areas within the regional district in the provision of any services (Blattner, 1974; Fleming, 1974; Postill, 1974).
In further support of the hypothesis, it is clear that the assistance requested from the provincial government by the Regional Board has been largely financial. In 1971, the Regional District asked the provincial government to meet the expenses generated by a consultant study, authorized by the Regional Board in 1970, of the possibility of the region assuming responsibility for the provision of all recreation services within its boundaries, including parks (Lancaster and others, 1973). In addition, in November 1974, the secretary-treasurer of the North Okanagan informed the Director of the Provincial Parks Branch that the regional district would adopt the regional parks function and accept responsibility for Silver Star Park if the Parks Branch would agree that the region would receive all revenue from park permits for developments in the park, and if the Provincial Department of Highways would bear the cost of improvements and snow-clearing of the winding road into the park. By contrast, the Board and staff of this region did not request any technical advice from the Parks Branch regarding park planning and development. In fact, some regional board members and residents interviewed, stated specifically that they did not want any "interference" from the provincial government in local matters (Alder, 1974; Attridge, 1974; Clarke, 1974; Fleming, 1974; Postill, 1974).

To further investigate this and other aspects, all respondents to the questionnaire survey were asked to
indicate whether specific factors, namely financial limitations, municipal disagreement and ambiguity in the distinction between municipal, regional and provincial parks hindered their regional governments' progress in the establishment of parks. The results obtained from this question have been compiled in Table 4:4. In addition, representatives of regional districts which had not yet undertaken the regional park function were asked to list problems which they felt had obstructed their regional board. Table 4:5 contains a summary of the responses to this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Respondent Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequacies of the Funding System</td>
<td>5(35.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreement Among Directors</td>
<td>5(35.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity of Definition</td>
<td>8(57.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5
Problems Perceived by Regional District Officials to be Hindering Adoption of the Parks Function (Number and Percentage of Questionnaires Returned from Officials Representing Regional Districts not Having the Parks Function)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Respondent Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequacies of the Funding System</td>
<td>3(33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreement Among Directors</td>
<td>3(33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity of Definition</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague Guidelines re responsibilities</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to these questions suggest that regional officials perceive several problems in the development of regional parks. However, as can be seen, fiscal limitations of the existing arrangements for such parks were mentioned as an obstacle by more respondents than any other problem. The administrative and operating expenses of regional parks were viewed as more of a problem than the capital costs of acquiring land by five of those officials who felt financing was an obstacle. Indeed, eight respondents indicated that, because sufficient Crown land is available, capital costs could be minimized.
Respondents to the questionnaire survey were also asked whether they felt that the provincial government had provided assistance to their regional district in the adoption of the regional parks function and the establishment of regional parks. Some respondents offered more detailed comments on these questions which provided further insight on the type of assistance desired by regional districts.

Table 4:6 indicates the number of respondents who felt that the provincial government assisted their regional district in the adoption of the regional parks function, while Table 4:7 shows the number of officials from regional districts having the function who felt that the Province has offered assistance in the development of regional parks. While these questions did not contain any reference to the type of help provided, those respondents who felt that assistance had been given generally stated that it was in the form of financial grants.

The results from these two questions suggest that other regional governments besides that of the North Okanagan favour increased financial assistance from the provincial government. In particular, three regional district representatives suggested that more help should be given with the administrative and operating costs of parks. However, four regional officials felt that the Province should offer more technical advice regarding park planning and development and two respondents commented that the provincial government
should provide more explicit information to the regional districts concerning the functions of regional parks and the guidelines for the division of responsibilities for these parks. Unlike the regional officials and residents of the North Okanagan, the respondents to the questionnaire did not indicate that they were concerned that provincial government interference in regional autonomy might result from increased assistance with the planning and development of parks.

Table 4:6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Respondents who Felt that the Province had Assisted their Regional District in Adopting the Regional Parks Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary-treasurers</td>
<td>5 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planners</td>
<td>2 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairmen</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4:7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Representatives of Regional Districts Having the Regional Parks Function Who Felt That the Province had Provided Assistance in the Development of Regional Parks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary-treasurers</td>
<td>5 (35.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planners</td>
<td>7 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairmen</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four types of data were examined to obtain insight on the validity of the general belief that fiscal constraints are an absolute barrier to the development of regional parks: the expenses generated by regional parks, the methods which the regional governments employ to meet these expenses, the mill rate which is employed for this purpose, and the cost of these parks to the taxpayer. I wrote to the secretary-treasurers of the regional districts of Alberni-Clayoquot, Cowichan Valley, East Kootenay, Greater Vancouver and Mount Waddington requesting that they forward information on the economics of the regional parks function in their region. Several secretary-treasurers were contacted because the costs of the regional parks function vary considerably in response to the price of land and the number and type of parks established.

**Expenses of Regional Parks**

The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), which presently holds, or has an interest in, ten regional park sites is one of the two regional governments which, in response to the questionnaire survey, indicated that more than five parks had been developed (see Table 4:1). In 1972, the regional board of the GVRD approved a five year park land acquisition program. It was resolved that a total of fifteen million dollars of regional funds would be spent on the purchase of land for parks under this program, of which three million would be spent each year (Penner, 1974). During the
last twelve months, three million dollars and a provincial grant of one million dollars have been employed for the acquisition of an estimated 677 acres of parkland, making a total of 3000 acres under regional control (GVRD Park Committee, 1973). The administration expenses, including development and operation costs for the upcoming year are anticipated to be $250,000 (GVRD Park Committee, 1973). Thus, the total predicted costs of regional parks in 1974 in this region may be summarized as shown in Table 4.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.8</th>
<th>Estimated Costs of Regional Parks in GVRD (1974)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Expenditures: by Regional District</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Province</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Expenditures</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>$4,250,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only in the last year has the GVRD begun to spend any money on development or operation of parks. Previously, all developments in parks were operated by lessees. The situation in the Lower Mainland is somewhat different from the rest of the province, because the Regional District is small and population has grown to the extent that competition with other uses requires that large sums be spent to acquire lands for regional park purposes.
Because the East Kootenay Regional District maintains three parks, it has been placed in the group of regions which have developed 2-5 regional parks. The total costs of regional parks in the region during 1973 were $41,360. Thus far, the regional district has endeavoured to obtain parkland by grant from the provincial government, rather than by purchasing land (Bertoia, 1974). The principal park expenses of the regional district, therefore, were those associated with administrative expenses, which totaled $41,360. In this case, the capital costs of the parks, which totaled $20,000 in 1973, even if paid by the regional government, would still be less than the administrative costs.

At present, the Cowichan Valley Regional District has holdings in two park sites and is, therefore, also considered to have reached the stage of having 2-5 regional parks. In 1974, the costs resulting from the regional park function are expected to be only $3,000, and will consist entirely of administrative and research costs, rather than land acquisition expenses (see Table 4:9).
Table 4:9
Estimated Expenses for Regional Parks of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (1974)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Maintenance</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and Research</td>
<td>$2,900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Costs of Acquiring Land</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,000.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cowichan Valley Regional District, Annual Budget, 1974.

The Mount Waddington Regional District falls in the category of regional governments maintaining one regional park. As can be seen in Table 4:10, administrative and development costs make up the largest proportion of the regional park expenses of this regional district as well. However, this regional government has been spending some money on the acquisition of parkland in recent years.
### Table 4.10

Expenses of Regional Parks of the Mount Waddington Regional District (1973)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration and Maintenance</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Properties</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of Properties</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$49,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Mount Waddington Regional District, Annual Budget, 1974

Alberni-Clayoquot, the final regional district considered, does not have any capital or administrative expenses associated with the adoption of the regional park function. It acquired the function in 1971, solely as a result of a Provincial donation of 1,400 acres on Mount Arrowsmith for development as a winter and summer recreation area. Since no other parks have been developed since that time, this region has been placed in the category of administering one regional park. The only expenses to the regional district resulting from adoption of the function were associated with a feasibility study of the park and ski area conducted in 1971. The Regional Board does not intend to either develop or operate the site, but rather to lease the property to a private group (Asher, 1974).
Methods Employed by Regional Districts to Meet Regional Park Expenses

Table 4:11 shows the revenue sources employed by the regional governments who responded to the questionnaire according to the steps taken to establish regional parks. The numbers cited do not necessarily represent one source per regional district, as some respondents did not answer this question and others listed more than one source.

Table 4:11

Sources of Revenue Employed by Regional Districts for Park Systems at Different Stages of Development (Number of Regional Districts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Source</th>
<th>Steps Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prov./Reg. Cost-sharing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation (Prov., Munic., and private)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Borrowing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the three regional districts which have not yet established any regional parks stated that no funding was required because no costs were generated by adoption of the regional parks function. In the remainder of the regional districts on which a questionnaire was completed, regional parks are funded by the provincial/regional cost-sharing
scheme outlined in the Regional Parks Act, under which the provincial government will undertake up to one-third of the total park expenses of the region. Respondents of some regional districts indicated other financial sources employed to supplement the cost-sharing arrangement. The donation of Crown, municipal or private land was mentioned most frequently. Representatives of only one regional district reported that capital borrowing had been employed to meet regional park expenses.

**Examples of Mill Rates Employed by Regional Districts to Bill Member Areas for Regional Parks**

Table 4 lists the maximum mill rate permitted under the Letters Patent of the regional districts of Alberni-Clayoquot, Cowichan Valley, East Kootenay, Greater Vancouver and Mount Waddington. Because the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot found it necessary to requisition money for regional parks only in 1971, the cited mill rate for that region applies only to that year.

It can be observed that, although there is some variation in the mill rate levied in different regional districts, none of the regional governments contacted have adopted a mill rate of even half that permitted under the Regional Parks Act. Moreover, since the Regional Board of the North Okanagan Regional District intends to bill member areas at .10 of a mill, the trend towards nominal mill rates for regional parks purposes appears to be continuing.
Table 4:12

Examples of Mill Rates Permitted for Use by Regional Districts to Meet Costs of Regional Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mill Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberni-Clayoquot (1971 only)</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowichan Valley</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Kootenay</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVRD</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Waddington</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Secretary-treasurers of regional districts.

The Cost of Regional Parks to the Taxpayer

The costs to the taxpayer of adoption of the regional parks function has been investigated by examining the taxes of residents of the North Okanagan Regional District. As has been previously stated, this regional government recently adopted the regional parks function, and has stated that a levy of .10 of a mill will be sufficient to meet regional park expenses. However, because this nominal requisition may be increased in the future, I have estimated the taxes which North Okanagan residents would pay for regional parks on the basis of a .30 mill rate. This mill rate should raise enough capital to meet the expected expenses of regional parks in this region.
Since land value differs from one part of the region to another, the taxes paid by homeowners also vary. For this reason, the taxes paid on three houses of equal quality but located in different sections of the region have been estimated. The three houses are located in Vernon, Coldstream, and in an electoral area. Since:

$$\text{Assessed Value} = 50\% \text{ of market value on land and}$$

$$= 50\% \text{ of market value on improvements,}$$

and $$\text{Tax Value} = 100\% \text{ of assessed value on land and}$$

$$= 75\% \text{ of assessed value on improvements,}$$

the taxes paid for regional parks would be as summarized in Table 4:13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Value of Land</th>
<th>Vernon</th>
<th>Coldstream</th>
<th>Electoral Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$12,400</td>
<td>$11,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Value of Improvements</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed Value of Land</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed Value of Improvements</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>8,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Value on Land</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Value of Improvements</td>
<td>6,375</td>
<td>6,375</td>
<td>6,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net tax value</td>
<td>12,575</td>
<td>11,875</td>
<td>11,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill rate for regional parks</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes Paid</td>
<td>$3.75</td>
<td>$3.54</td>
<td>$3.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regional District of North Okanagan, Review of Tax Base, 1970. (Land Values have been adjusted in the hopes of allowing for increases since 1970.)
The total regional and municipal taxes presently paid by the owners of these homes are as shown in Table 4:14.

Table 4:14
Total Municipal and Regional Taxes Paid by Homeowner in the North Okanagan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Mill Rate</th>
<th>Vernon</th>
<th>Coldstream</th>
<th>Electoral Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxes Paid</td>
<td>$1,021.00</td>
<td>$964.00</td>
<td>$934.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus, the increase in taxes for regional parks represents only a very small proportion (approximately .35%) of the total taxes paid by the homeowners of the region. These figures can be further placed in perspective when compared to the taxes which the same homeowners would presently be paying for hospitals, a function administered by the same board as that of the regional district.

Table 4:15
Hospital Taxes Paid by Homeowner in the North Okanagan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mill rate for Hospitals</th>
<th>Vernon</th>
<th>Coldstream</th>
<th>Electoral Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxes Paid for Hospitals</td>
<td>$21.23</td>
<td>$20.53</td>
<td>$19.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hospitals are clearly more of a necessity to a community than regional parks and homeowners would, therefore, be more willing to pay for hospital services than for park facilities. However, a comparison of the taxes paid for the two services indicates that the cost of regional parks to the homeowner is extremely small relative to that of hospitals and might be perceived of as a bargain by most residents.

Thus this investigation, while limited, supports the second premise of the hypothesis. Financial limitations should not and, in fact, do not, constitute a prohibitive barrier to the development of regional parks by regional districts. It has been demonstrated that the costs of regional parks to the regional governments and the taxpayers are low in absolute terms. Some regional districts are able to adopt the regional parks function without any cost to themselves, and even the GVRD, one of the two regional districts which have made the most progress in establishing regional parks, has not experienced very large regional park expenses. Furthermore, the expenses of regional parks must also be considered low relative to the costs of other services. Taxes paid for regional park development make up a small proportion of the homeowner's total tax load.

It would seem, therefore, that there must be some other explanation for the fact that many regional districts are not politically motivated to develop regional parks until potential parkland is taken for other uses. One possible
explanation is based on the variation in the assessment totals of regional districts. It may be that, although regional park expenses are low in absolute terms, they are sufficiently large to prevent regional districts with low assessment totals from participating in the regional parks function. Stock (1973) suggests that the extent of a region's involvement in any function reflects the size of the assessment of that region. However, as suggested by Figure 4.4, there is no strong relationship between the progress which respondents to the questionnaire survey indicated had been made in developing regional parks and assessment totals.

A second, alternative, explanation is that regional officials are not aware that regional park expenses are low. This explanation is supported by the fact that regional officials stated, in their responses to the questionnaire survey, that they were unsure of the nature of the financial responsibilities of the regional and provincial levels of government.

However, the results of this study provide more support for a third explanation for regional district apathy on this matter; that is, that residents of these areas simply do not feel that such parks are important enough to spend money on. It may be that the public perceives all of the surrounding countryside as parkland and, therefore, sees no need to designate any specific area as a park. The fact that some
FIGURE 4.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL DISTRICT AND PROGRESS MADE IN DEVELOPING REGIONAL PARKS (1973)

Steps Taken

- 5+ Regional Parks
- 2-5 Regional Parks
- 1 Regional Park
- Planning Stage
- Considered Adoption of Function
- Never Considered Adoption of Function

Assessment (in units of 1000 dollars)

50,000 75,000 100,000 125,000 150,000 175,000 200,000 225,000 250,000 275,000 300,000 325,000 350,000 575,000 600,000 625,000 650,000 850,000 900,000
regional officials indicated that their governments became interested in regional parks because potential parkland seemed to be growing scarce provides indirect evidence for this conclusion.

The results of the case study provided more direct evidence. It was demonstrated that, when interest groups expressed a demand for adoption of the regional parks function, the North Okanagan Regional Board assumed responsibility for the development of regional parks. This suggests that there cannot be a public demand for regional parks in most regional districts, or regional governments would be prompted to become involved with the regional parks function.

In further support of this final explanation, the regional districts are not making full use of the sources of capital available to finance regional parks. As has been observed, none of the five regional districts investigated regarding the economics of the regional parks function employed even half of the one mill requisition permitted by the Regional Parks Act. Moreover, the responses to the questionnaire survey demonstrated that regional governments are not taking advantage of the possibility of government grants and capital borrowing. This indicates that regional officials do not perceive sufficient public demand to justify spending even small additional amounts on regional parks.
CHAPTER 5
Implications for the Provincial Government
Regional Park Policy

The results of the investigation of this study suggest many regional districts are not currently interested in the establishment of accessible quasi-natural recreation areas. Their residents, living in a rural undeveloped environment, do not feel any need for regional parks themselves. Furthermore, they have not been stimulated to assume the cost of setting aside parkland for future migrants to their regions, however small these costs may be. Under these circumstances, regional governments are not politically motivated to become involved in the regional parks function. As yet, the provincial government has not given a reason why the present residents of an area should pay the cost of parks for future immigrants if they are not themselves interested in using the parks now.

Thus, if the provincial government wishes to develop its objective of setting aside lands for future regional parks, it should change its approach to this problem. One alternative approach would involve the Province taking responsibility for planning for expected future demand. Regional governments can then assume responsibility for these lands as demand occurs and they are politically motivated to do so.
A two-pronged regional parks policy is, therefore, recommended to the provincial government.

1. The provincial government should preserve parkland to meet future demand for regional parks.

2. The provincial government should smooth the way for those regional governments which become interested in involvement in the regional parks function.

This policy, of course, assumes the validity of the provincial government's contention that regional districts should be involved in the provision of regional parks. Methods of implementing this dual policy will now be suggested.

Methods of Preserving Land for Future Regional Parks

There are several existing pieces of provincial legislation which can be employed as tools to set aside lands for future regional parks. The legislation gives three provincial agencies responsibility for lands which, it is proposed, could be designated for future regional parks.

The Provincial Parks Act (1965, c. 31, s. 4) gives the Parks Branch jurisdiction over "all matters concerning parks". On the basis of this authority, the Parks Branch may request the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to preserve land considered to have a potential for development as a provincial park from disposition under the terms of the Land Act (1970). The locations of many of these "park reserves" are more suitable to regional than provincial
parks (Matheson, 1973). These sites could be held by the Province for transfer to a regional government. Moreover, other additional sites might be reserved in this manner for future development as regional parks.

The provincial legislation regarding Class C, or local, provincial parks offers the Parks Branch a second means of retaining land for future regional parks (Park Act, 1965; c. 31, s. 6, 8, 9, 10; B.C. Reg. 227, 1967). As stated earlier in this study, the Parks Branch intends to gradually phase out these parks. Instead, however, they could perhaps be held in reserve until the appropriate regional governments were prepared to take on the parks function. Furthermore, since the Park Act permits the Branch to acquire lands for Class C parks (Park Act, 1965; c. 31, s. 11), additional regional park reserves might also be obtained under this legislation.

The Environment and Land Use Committee, on the authority of the Green Belt Protection Fund Act (1972), might also be able to reserve land for future regional parks. This Act established a fund of twenty-five million dollars for the purpose of the "establishment and preservation in perpetuity of areas of land, commonly known as "green belts", throughout the Province (Green Belt Protection Fund Act, 1972, c. 24, Preamble, s. 1). Since the Act indicates that these lands could be used for "parklands without camping", it would seem that some green belt land could also contribute to a
regional park reserve. As yet, however, the Committee has purchased green belt land only in the vicinity of the Lower Mainland and Victoria (The Province, December 29, 1973).

The Land Commission of British Columbia, too, could potentially reserve land to meet future demand for regional parks. The Land Commission Act, which established this organization, states that its object is to:

(a) preserve land for farm use . . .
(b) preserve green belt land in and around urban areas . . .
(c) preserve land bank land for urban and industrial development, and . . .
(d) preserve park land for recreational use . . .

and that it has the power to:

... purchase or acquire land except by expropriation, on such terms and conditions as may be negotiated, and hold such land for the purposes of this act (Land Commission Act, 1973, s. 7).

Both the "green belt reserves" and the "park reserves" mentioned in this Act might be employed as means of acquiring suitable regional park reserves. To date, however, the Land Commission has primarily concentrated on the establishment of a system of agricultural reserves. Representatives of the Commission do not foresee any examination of the question of park reserves in the immediate future, and the initial steps are only now being taken to develop a system of green belt reserves (Murry, 1974).

Because no procedures or criteria have been established regarding either the greenbelt or park reserves, certain
ambiguities may be identified in the policy of the Commission. The basis of future funding has not yet been resolved, for example. The Land Commission Act stipulates that the green belt and park reserves are to be financed by the Accelerated Park Development Fund Act (1972) and the Green Belt Protection Fund Act, or any other act that authorizes moneys to be paid for that purpose (1973, s. 21). The Environment and Land Use Committee has transferred five million dollars of the Green Belt Protection Fund to the Commission (Lane, 1974). However, as yet, no money from the Accelerated Park Development Fund has been utilized by the Land Commission, and it is not known by representatives of the Commission whether further capital will be provided under any other Act (Murry, 1974). In addition, guidelines regarding the type of land which is to be set aside have yet to be determined. At present, it has been decided only that attempts will be made to reflect regional district preferences, and that green belt lands are to be located near existing urban centres (Murry, 1974). If these lands are to be employed in the establishment of a regional park reserve, however, some consideration must also be given to future urban developments. Finally, the provincial government has not yet resolved which agency or level of government will hold land acquired by the Land Commission (Murry, 1974). All of these questions would have to be resolved before any of the lands obtained under the Commission's park or green belt reserves could be included in a regional park reserve.
There is considerable overlap among both the different legislation which sets aside lands and the agencies which presently administer these lands. No distinction is made between the functions which these parklands would eventually be expected to serve, and no attempts are made to determine whether the reserves are equitably distributed throughout the province. Thus, there is clearly a need for organization and co-ordination in the administration of regional park reserves.

The Environment and Land Use Committee, established in 1971 by the Environment and Land Use Act would appear to be the most logical agency to take responsibility for co-ordination and administration of this reserve, as it has been empowered to

... ensure that all aspects of preservation and maintenance of the natural environment are fully considered in the administration of land use and resources development

... appoint technical committees, and

... subject to the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council provide for the remuneration of experts, specialists and researchers (Environment and Land Use Act, 1971, s. 3, b, s. 4, b, c).

Moreover, the Committee's previous experience with the Green Belt Protection Fund Act would appear to further qualify it for this role.

The specific responsibilities which would be placed on the Committee in co-ordinating the establishment of the regional park reserves would include:
(a) The establishment of criteria to be employed in determining which of the lands already set aside are suitable for inclusion in the reserve and selecting sufficient additional sites.

(b) Providing an opportunity for regional district input in the selection of regional park reserves.

The regional governments, who should be knowledgeable of physical characteristics in their regions at the level of individual sites, and of trends in land use may be able to provide useful advice in the selection of sites to be preserved. It is, therefore, recommended that the provincial government establish some mechanism for soliciting the recommendations of regional boards and staff, and that lists of proposed reserves be submitted to regional officials for their views. In addition, the Advisory Planning Commissions and the Technical Planning Committees offer provincial officials a means of securing the views of residents of the region and local staff of the provincial resource departments. It is further suggested, therefore, that comments be obtained from these two committees on all proposed reserves in a region.

(c) Holding regional park reserves until required, and administering the transfer of the reserves to the regional governments which adopt the regional parks function.
Methods of Assisting Those Regional Governments Which Become Interested in Adoption of the Regional Parks Function and Development of Regional Parks

The provincial government should not actively attempt to persuade regional districts to administer regional parks, as this would be an infringement on regional government autonomy. The initiative for the development of these parks should be left to the regional governments, with the Province providing assistance to those regions interested in adoption of the regional park function. The following recommendations are made regarding the assistance to be offered by the provincial government.

(a) When requested, provincial officials should provide advice to regional districts regarding such alternative sources of funds as private donations, concessions, and entrance fees, and the planning, development and administration.

(b) The results of both the case study and the questionnaire survey suggested that disagreement between elected regional representatives hinders regional districts in decisions regarding regional parks. Nevertheless, it is not recommended that the provincial government become involved in regional board disputes, as this would be an interference in the decision-making process of the regional government.

(c) The results of the questionnaire also showed that ambiguity regarding the division of responsibility for the
administration and expenses of regional parks is a problem for some regional governments undertaking the parks function. Since there is some possibility that lack of awareness of the small costs of regional parks may prevent regional district involvement in the regional park function, it is suggested that provincial officials prepare a publication on the function of regional parks, their costs, and the regional and provincial responsibilities concerning them.

(d) Two questions regarding the provision of financial assistance to regional governments for regional park expenses remain to be faced. The amount of financial aid to be provided by the Province must be determined. The results of this investigation show that regional districts would like the provincial government to provide more assistance, particularly with the on-going administrative costs of regional parks. It was observed in Chapter 2 that, due to spillover effects, the government is willing to undertake some of the burden of regional park expenses. However, if the residents of these regions are not sufficiently interested in regional parks to pay minimal administrative expenses, even when they would acquire parkland free of cost, should the Province undertake these expenses?

The basis of apportionment must also be decided. An equitable means of distribution of financial assistance must be developed. The present system of providing help on the basis of the amount of capital being spent on parks by the
regional district is not necessarily fair. Due to variation in assessment totals, the same mill rate may generate different amounts of money for park development in different regional districts. The assessment total of regional districts range from approximately $52,000,000 in the Sunshine Coast Regional District to $3,446,353,430 in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (Department of Municipal Affairs, 1973). It is recommended that the provincial government explore these two questions further.

Relationship Between the Proposed Regional Park Policy and General Provincial Objectives for Regional Governments

It was observed in Chapter 2 of this thesis that provincial officials have two objectives for regional districts—to permit local public input in land-use planning and the administration of services, and to co-ordinate the activities of the various government agencies and departments in an area through the exchange of information and plans. In addition to meeting the provincial objectives for regional parks, the proposed policy should be compatible with these general goals. Local public view on the development of regional parks would be respected, as the development of means of permitting regional input in the selection of park sites is recommended, and each region would still adopt the parks function at its own volition. Moreover, both phases of the suggested policy would involve considerable contact between regional and
provincial officials, providing an opportunity for further exchange of information on other matters.


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APPENDIX I

Questionnaire Survey of Regional Officials

Name:
Position:
Regional District:

1. (a) Has the regional board of your regional district adopted the regional parks function established by the Regional Parks Act?

Yes No

If the answer is yes--

(b) When was the decision to adopt the regional parks function made?

(c) What steps have been taken to establish a regional parks system within your regional district?

(d) What sources of funds have been used to finance regional parks?

(e) What factors do you feel led to the adoption of the regional parks function? Please indicate the importance of each.

If the answer is no--

(f) How often has the regional district board considered adopting the parks function?

(g) What factors do you feel have prevented the regional board from adopting the parks function? Please indicate the importance of each factor.
2. Mr. R.H. Ahrens, Director of the B.C. Parks Branch, has defined the function of regional parks as providing:

... in a situation of contiguous municipalities or neighbouring towns with rural "suburbs", for a system of parks based ... on natural attractions of significance mainly to the people of that region ... (R.H. Ahrens, The Philosophy of Regional and Provincial Parks, 1970).

In your opinion, is there a demand in your regional district for parks of this nature—

(a) by the general public? Yes No

Please explain.

(b) by a specific interest group? Yes No

Please explain.

(c) by a business interest? Yes No

Please explain.

3. As you are aware, the Regional Parks Act, as amended in March 1972 states that:

... a Regional Parks Board may, by by-law, borrow money for capital purposes in connection with the acquisition or development of regional parks and regional trails ...

The extent of this long-range borrowing is not to exceed five million dollars or

... an amount equal to ten times the product obtained by multiplying one-half mill by the assessed value of land, and by seventy-five per cent of the value of taxable improvements for the purpose of levying school and hospital rates ...

The Provincial government will, in addition, issue a separate grant which shall not exceed
one-third of the amount of borrowed principal, and interest thereon, that, at the time the grant under this section is made have been repaid or will be repaid within the current accounting year (Act to Amend the Regional Parks Act, 1972, s. 11 (2)(b).

In order for a regional district to qualify for such grants they must meet two conditions.

(i) During the first five years after the regional park function has been assumed, 60 per cent of the annual revenue for the park district must be used for land acquisition for parks.

(ii) A list of land acquisitions must be submitted to the Provincial Government quarterly.

(a) Does the funding system established by these provisions allow sufficient financial resources that your regional district can afford to establish a regional parks system?

Yes  No

(b) If these arrangements are unsatisfactory, what features are you unhappy with?

(c) What changes in the funding system would make it possible for your regional district to adopt the parks function if it has not already done so?

4. (a) Have there been significant differences in opinion amongst the municipal officials of your regional district with regard to the establishment of a regional park system?

Yes  No

(b) If such differences have occurred, please describe the nature of them.
5. (a) In your opinion, is the distinction between municipal, regional and provincial parks clearly enough defined?
Yes No

(b) If not, please indicate the inadequacies of the existing definition.

6. How frequently is there communication between the regional board of your regional district and members of the staff of the Provincial Parks Branch?

7. Do you feel that the Province has encouraged the regional board of your regional district to adopt the regional parks function?
Yes No
Please indicate the basis for your conclusion.

8. If your regional district has adopted the parks function, do you feel that the Provincial government has assisted in the process of establishing a regional park system in your regional district?
Yes No
Please indicate the basis for your conclusion.