



April 6, 2009

## **CAMPERS BREAK BOOKINGS RECORD AS FIRST YEAR OF FREE PROVINCIAL PARK ENTRY BEGINS**

Manitoba campers broke campsite bookings records by noon today as Conservation Minister Stan Struthers said free entry to Manitoba's parks will provide opportunities for all Manitobans for better summer living.

"Families may look for recreation opportunities closer to home during these tough times," Struthers said. "To provide more opportunities for Manitobans to take advantage of the province's great outdoors, there will be no entrance fees to provincial parks for the next two years."

By noon today, campers had booked a record number of campsites, surpassing by 15 per cent the number made by the same time last year today as the made-in-Manitoba Provincial Parks Reservation Service opened, Struthers said.

A total of 9,194 reservations were made in record time by noon today due in part to improvements made to the service this year including modifications to the electronic queuing service developed by a Manitoba company. The modifications eased pressure on the system and showed service users where they are in line.

The online reservation service continues to be the most popular method of obtaining a reservation and is supported by the call centre for the customers who prefer to talk with an agent.

A record 55,298 reservations were made through the system last year, providing thousands of campers with the opportunity for a wonderful and relaxing outdoor experience. In 2006, the first year of the new system, 47,870 bookings were made.

Over the past 10 years, significant improvements have been made to Manitoba's parks including:

- providing 9-1-1 emergency services to some of Manitoba's busiest parks including South Whiteshell, Birds Hill, Hecla-Grindstone, Clearwater Lake and Grand Beach;
- repatriating the province's reservation system, increasing reservations by 50.4 per cent since the system was introduced in 2006;
- adding and upgrading more than 600 campsites since 2004; and
- Providing new outdoor opportunities such as the camping shelters called yurts that have

been built at Nutimik Lake in the Whiteshell and in Spruce Woods, Asessippi, Clearwater Lake and Bakers Narrows provincial parks.

Information on fall camping is available at [www.manitobaparks.com](http://www.manitobaparks.com) or by calling 1-800-214-6497 (toll-free) or 945-6784 in Winnipeg.

Members of the public are reminded that park entry permits are still required in Riding Mountain National Park, which is not part of the provincial parks system.

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