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Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Investment

\$8.7M PROTECTS HISTORIC BARKERVILLE AND FORT STEELE

VICTORIA - The Province is investing \$8.7 million to preserve and protect two of B.C.'s historic treasures: Fort Steele and Barkerville, announced Donna Barnett MLA for Cariboo-Chilcotin on behalf of Margaret MacDiarmid, Minister of Tourism, Trade and Investment.

The funding will upgrade sewer, water and fire suppression systems over the next four years to safeguard health, safety and the environment, and to prevent the loss of irreplaceable artefacts at the two heritage sites.

"Our historic buildings, structures and cultural landscapes attract tourists from all over the world, creating jobs for British Columbians and supporting sustainable communities," said MacDiarmid. "This \$8.7-million investment reflects government's commitment to preserving these irreplaceable sites, which help us appreciate and understand our heritage, as well as being crucial to the prosperity of our tourism sector."

Visitors to Fort Steele and Barkerville generate over \$5 million in provincial tax revenue each year and contribute more than \$21 million to the province's GDP. For the two properties, the Province has allocated an infrastructure budget of up to \$6.87 million for Barkerville, and up to \$1.83 million for Fort Steele.

"Support for B.C.'s heritage sites is a vital investment, not only in the preservation of our history, but in the strength of our local economies," said Barnett. "Key signature heritage attractions such as Barkerville and Fort Steele play an essential role in the diversity, sustainability and attractiveness of our communities. They entice visitors to stay longer and spend more which in turn supports and creates jobs for our residents."

A recent economic impact study showed Barkerville creates the equivalent of 156 full-year jobs in the region for B.C. residents, with wages and salaries totalling \$6.6 million in 2009.

"This funding is a great investment in our local economy," said Judy Campbell, CEO of Barkerville Historic Town. "Barkerville is one of our foremost tourism destinations in the Cariboo region, and it stands as a monument to the people and events that have shaped British Columbia and Canada's history."

Fort Steele supports the equivalent of 295 year-round jobs for residents in the region, according to the Conference Board of Canada.

"Heritage sites like Fort Steele offer a wealth of historically rich and fascinating stories to our visitors and residents," said Laura Williams, CEO of Friends of Fort Steele Society. "We are thrilled to have this funding for upgrades that are critical to the future conservation of Fort Steele."

Barkerville and Fort Steele are two of 11 provincial heritage properties open to the public. They are operated and managed in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Investment through heritage site management agreements with community organizations. Since 2001, the Province has invested \$28.3 million in provincial heritage properties around British Columbia.

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ABOUT BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN

Barkerville Historic Town is the largest historic site in western North America (www.barkerville.ca). Barkerville is provincially, nationally and internationally recognized for its historic significance associated with its place in western Canada's gold rush era and the role the gold rush played in BC joining Canada. Barkerville is widely known as a "must see" for travel itineraries in western Canada. The historic town is also a significant contributor to the Cariboo regional economy and is widely regarded as a unique component of the regional identity.

The Barkerville Heritage Trust, as Barkerville's operating and managing partner, works in conjunction with the Province of British Columbia, the owner and statutory guardian of Barkerville's heritage resources, to ensure that Barkerville is efficiently managed, entertaining and educational to visitors, and financially stable as the premier heritage resource and tourism attraction for the Cariboo. The ultimate aim is to maintain and enhance Barkerville's position as a nationally significant heritage resource and tourism attraction for British Columbia and Canada.

Barkerville is situated 80 km east of Quesnel, British Columbia in the foothills of the Cariboo Mountains, close to Troll Mountain Ski Resort and Bowron Lake Provincial Park. The nearby community of Wells (8 km from Barkerville) is the service and housing centre for the area (www.wellsbc.com) and is itself a dynamic cultural community, home of Island Mountain Arts, the acclaimed Toni Only Artists' Project, the International Celtic Harp School (www.imarts.com), the dynamic indie music festival ArtsWells (www.artswells.com), and the Sunset Theatre (www.sunset-theatre.com). Wells is also situated close to a wide variety of winter and summer outdoor activities.

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