

## **LOWER TAXES FOR COMMERCIAL RURAL RECREATIONAL SITES**

**The Westbank & District Chamber of Commerce** applauds the Province who announced in Victoria on December 23<sup>rd</sup> that they are easing the tax burden for commercial rural recreational accommodation properties.

In 2007 the Westbank & District Chamber of Commerce listened to our membership who were concerned with the loss of campgrounds, forestry campsites and recreational venues, and with this concern, we took to the BC Chamber of Commerce Annual General meeting, a resolution on "Stemming the Loss of Campgrounds". One of our recommendations is being addressed by this new policy. This shows the power of the Chamber movement and even smaller chambers can become an influence and create a better community, province and country.

The Province recognized these large tracts of land are not used entirely for commercial purposes, announced Bill Bennett, Minister of Community and Rural Development. "Rural recreational accommodation properties are currently subject to business property tax rates, which can be much higher than recreational property tax rates," said Bennett. "This amendment means portions of wilderness camps, fishing resorts and guide outfitter camps will be taxed as recreational properties." "As we work to meet our goal of doubling tourism revenues by 2015, we need to support rural recreational accommodation businesses in every corner of this province," said Kevin Krueger, Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts. "This amendment will make it easier for these business owners to continue to host tourists in some of B.C.'s most unique locations." The Council of Tourism Associations (COTA) requested the review that led to this change, which is being implemented for the 2010 Assessment Roll. "This is great news for the tourism industry," said Jim Storie, chair of COTA. "These businesses contribute significantly to the allure of the province's most remote locations, and attract thousands of tourists annually who are interested in outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, kayaking, mountain climbing and hiking." BC Assessment has estimated that approximately 1,300 rural recreational accommodation properties will be affected by the regulation. The total savings for these properties is estimated to be between \$500,000 and \$600,000, based on 2009 tax rates.