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### Good governance in protected areas: an evaluation of stakeholders' perceptions in British Columbia and Ontario Provincial Parks

Paul F.J. Eagles<sup>a</sup>, Francesc Romagosa<sup>b</sup>, Windekind C. Buteau-Duitschaever<sup>c</sup>, Mark Havitz<sup>a</sup>, Troy D. Glover<sup>a</sup> & Bonnie McCutcheon<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

<sup>b</sup> Departament de Geografia, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

<sup>c</sup> Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

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## Good governance in protected areas: an evaluation of stakeholders' perceptions in British Columbia and Ontario Provincial Parks

Paul F.J. Eagles<sup>a\*</sup>, Francesc Romagosa<sup>b</sup>, Windekind C. Buteau-Duitschaever<sup>c</sup>, Mark Havitz<sup>a</sup>, Troy D. Glover<sup>a</sup> and Bonnie McCutcheon<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada;*

<sup>b</sup>*Departament de Geografia, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain;* <sup>c</sup>*Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada*

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As government funding is reduced and tourism-based fees are increasingly used to fund protected area operations, two options are often used for management: transfer of tourism services to the private sector or operation of tourism services by a government agency that functions like a corporation. This paper reports stakeholders' views concerning governance for two prominent, but different, management models for protected areas' tourism services in Canada. British Columbia Provincial Parks uses profit-making companies to deliver park services; Ontario Provincial Parks uses the parastatal approach, where park staff members provide most services directly. Surveys of five key stakeholder groups (park staff, visitors, contractors working in park, nearby residents and NGOs with an interest in parks) provided higher rankings of perceptions of governance criteria closer to good governance for the Ontario approach, with important differences found between some groups and amongst some criteria in both park systems. This research suggests that the parastatal model is perceived as superior by important stakeholder groups, using the lens of standard governance criteria, compared to the outsourcing model that uses profit-making companies to provide park tourism services. This finding has implications globally where governments seek to shift park funding from government towards tourism fees and charges.

**Keywords:** protected areas; tourism management; visitor management; ecotourism; globalization; national parks

### Introduction: governance, tourism and protected areas

In a general sense, governance is “the system of formal and informal rules that establish the interaction and cooperation guidelines among the different stakeholders that intervene in the decision making process” (Roca, 2006, p. 12). Hence, governance involves the state, but transcends the state, because it also involves corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals. Governance has three spheres: political, economic and administrative. Political governance is the process of decision-making that determines policy. Economic governance concerns the processes whereby economic decisions are made. Administrative governance is the system that implements law and policy. All three are intertwined and dependent upon each other (UNDP, 1997).

Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003, pp. 2–3) in their work on parks define governance as “the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say. Fundamentally, it is about power, relationships and

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\*Corresponding author. Email: [eagles@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:eagles@uwaterloo.ca)

Table 1. Biodiversity and social concerns of governance for decision-making and planning.

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Determining where a protected area is needed, where it should be located and what type of status it should have.
Determining who is entitled to have a say about matters relevant to the protected area.
Creating rules about the land and resource uses allowed inside the protected area, and establishing zones for different levels of access and use.
Enforcing the agreed zoning and rules.
Deciding how financial and other resources will be spent to support specific conservation and sustainable development activities concerning the protected area.
Generating revenues and deciding how those are distributed and used.
Entering into agreements with other parties to share or delegate some of the above powers and to decide about other matters relevant to the protected area.

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Source: Adapted from Borrini-Feyerabend et al. (2006); Graham et al. (2003).

accountability: who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held accountable". Although both management and governance are interconnected, they are distinct from each other; management addresses what is done about a given site or situation and governance addresses who makes decisions and how they are made (Borrini-Feyerabend, Johnston, & Pansky, 2006). Hall (2011) maintains that governance will be a significant concept in tourism planning and policy for the foreseeable future.

While governance has been widely discussed in various public and non-public sectors such as health care, education, business and economics, it remains a relatively new and emerging concept and topic in the field of environmental studies and more specifically protected areas. Regarding parks and protected areas, scholarly literature on governance in these fields is still limited and relatively recent (Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner, & Heylings, 2003; Balloffet & Martin, 2007; Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2006; Dearden, Bennett, & Johnston, 2005; Eagles, 2008, 2009; Eagles, Havitz, McCutcheon, Buteau-Duitschaever, & Glover, 2010; Graham et al., 2003; Hannah, 2006; Lockwood, 2010).

The world's protected area estate contains some of the most important ecosystems, habitats and species while serving as important cultural places where people contemplate and understand the natural world through visitation and tourism. Dearden et al. (2005, p. 98) maintain that "it is not sufficient to have the right numbers of protected areas in the right places, it is also necessary to ensure that their governance is able to manage them in an effective manner and produce the desired outcomes". Balloffet and Martin (2007, p. 2) state that "the degree to which protected areas meet conservation objectives, contribute to the well-being of society, and achieve broad social, economic and environmental goals is closely related to the quality of their governance". The work carried out by Smith, Muir, Walpole, Balmford and Leader-Williams (2003) showed the existence of a very strong relationship between the quality of governance and the quality of biodiversity conservation. Therefore, governance is important for improving the ecological state of the territory, and also for facilitating greater participation of civil society in protected areas management and enhancing the long-term sustainability of those protected areas.

Protected area governance incorporates both social and ecological concerns by addressing the who, why and how of decision-making. Specifically, there are many important biodiversity and social concerns concerning governance that must be addressed (Table 1).

In the classic model of protected area governance, the government is the main or only actor making decisions about managing the area. More recently, the role of government

has shifted from being a provider and controller to being a facilitator and enabler by incorporating several stakeholders apart from the state in decision-making processes (Paavola, Gouldson, & Kluvankova-Oravska, 2009; Stoker, 1998). Such stakeholders can be park visitors, local community members around the protected area (Balloffet & Martin, 2007) as well as NGOs (Eagles, McCool, & Haynes, 2002). Decentralized governance, with market and individual focused instruments, is the most important trend in environmental governance (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). This newer perspective is, according to Lockwood (2010), the reflection of several political, social and environmental changes. One is the recognition of the right of local and indigenous communities to have their voice heard in protected area management, as they have traditionally been displaced and disadvantaged in the protected area establishments in many parts of the world. A second is the recognition of the need of new governance models like community-based and multi-level approaches. Lockwood (2010) states this is a response to the occasional failure of the traditional top-down model based on the state that denied involvement of local communities, and brought about many practical (e.g. declines in biodiversity) and moral (e.g. lack of social justice) limitations. A third is a better-informed society pressing for a greater say in decisions that affect their lives, including designation and management of protected areas, and this has led to the opening of the protected areas' decision-making process to a wider number of stakeholders, such as the private sector, local communities and NGOs. A fourth involves the neoliberal trends followed by many governments during the last few decades that have brought about the transfer of responsibilities in the management of protected areas from governmental bodies to the private sector. Our research provides insight into one example of such a movement, in this case from the Province of British Columbia, where park management was transferred to the private, profit-making sector. The fifth is evidence that the problems affecting the protected areas require a landscape-scale response, as there is the recognition that a diversity of human activities and actors has influence and therefore, should have a say in protected area management. And finally there is tourism growth, bringing new pressures to bear on park management, new opportunities, and new stakeholders with their own evolving and complex governance systems (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Eagles, 2002).

This new context explains the diversity and complexity of management models for protected areas. To understand such complexity, it is necessary to distinguish the three functional elements that make up the management of protected areas: (1) the ownership of the resources; (2) the sources of income for management; and (3) the management body (Eagles, 2008, 2009).

Essentially, the ownership of the resources has four options: (1) a government agency; (2) a non-profit institution; (3) a for-profit corporation; or (4) a community. There are three broad categories of sources of income for the management of protected areas: (1) societal taxes, which are often used in developed countries; (2) user fees and charges, the main source of income in developing countries; and (3) donations, which are usually a secondary source of income. In some countries foreign aid donations assist with management, typically in the form of capital improvement. Regarding the management body, there are five alternatives: (1) a typical government agency; (2) a parastatal, which is a corporation owned by government; (3) a non-profit, private corporation; (4) a for-profit, private corporation; or (5) a community (Eagles, 2008, 2009).

The four ownership types, the three sources of income and the five alternative management bodies lead to 60 combinations, each a different management model. From the 60 combinations, there are eight commonly found at the international scale: (1) national park model; (2) parastatal model; (3) non-profit model; (4) ecolodge model; (5) public and

Table 2. Main management models of protected areas and their characteristics.

Management model	Ownership of the resources	Sources of income	Management body
National park	Government	Societal taxes	Governmental body
Parastatal	Government	User fees and charges	Governmental corporation
Non-profit organization	Non-profit institution	Donations	Non-profit institution
Ecolodge	For-profit corporation	User fees and charges	For-profit corporation
Public and for-profit combination	Government	Societal taxes and user fees and charges	Governmental and for-profit corporation combination
Public and non-profit combination	Government	Societal taxes and user fees and charges	Governmental and non-profit institution combination
Aboriginal and government	Aboriginal groups	Societal taxes and user fees and charges	Governmental body
Traditional-community	Aboriginal groups	User fees and charges	Aboriginal groups

for-profit combination model; (6) public and non-profit combination model; (7) aboriginal and government model; and (8) traditional-community model (Eagles, 2008, 2009). The functional elements that characterize each of the eight cited management models are shown in Table 2.

There exist, however, other possible classifications of management and governance models for protected areas. For instance, Abrams et al. (2003) and Borrini-Feyerabend et al. (2006) make a more simplified proposal that groups protected areas in four main models: (1) government protected areas; (2) co-managed protected areas; (3) private protected areas; and (4) community conserved areas. This simplified approach does account for all the possible combinations of ownership, income source and management model outlined by Eagles (2008, 2009). In any case, each of the management models can be evaluated according to standard governance principles, as will be explained ahead.

The goal of this research is to compare stakeholder views on governance for two widely used management models; the parastatal model and the public and for-profit combination model. Each of these models is increasingly being used in park management as government funding is reduced and tourism-based fees are used to fund park operations. These two management models may be the most utilized approaches internationally in this current time of global financial restraint. Each has implications for the practice of sustainable tourism.

### Quality analysis of governance: towards good governance

Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie and Tkaczynski (2010) report on the governance dimensions used most frequently in the literature. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (UNDP, 1997), good governance should be based on 10 criteria:

1. *Public participation*: all people should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests.

2. *Consensus orientation*: the ability to mediate differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group.
3. *Strategic vision*: looking constructively towards the future, with consideration of the historical, cultural and social complexities of each situation.
4. *Responsiveness*: when institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders using a proactive manner regarding complaints and criticism.
5. *Effectiveness*: the capacity to realize organizational objectives.
6. *Efficiency*: making the best use of resources or the capability of acting or producing effectively with a minimum amount or quantity of waste, expense or unnecessary effort.
7. *Accountability*: officials answer to stakeholders on the disposal of their owners and duties, act on criticisms or requirements made of them and accept responsibility for failure, incompetence or deceit.
8. *Transparency*: sharing of information and acting in an open manner.
9. *Equity*: just treatment, requiring that similar cases be treated in similar ways.
10. *Rule of law*: legal frameworks being fair and enforced impartially.

From the protected area management point of view, good governance will be achieved when all the above criteria are present and successfully implemented within a specific management model (Graham et al., 2003), while concurrently carrying out the two main goals that protected areas pursue: the conservation of natural and cultural resources, and the provision of education and recreation services through visitation and tourism (Eagles & McCool, 2002).

Graham et al. (2003) grouped the 10 UNDP general criteria in five categories, specifically considering protected areas: (1) legitimacy and voice; (2) direction; (3) performance; (4) accountability; and (5) fairness. This five-category classification was accepted by the IUCN's World Parks Congress (World Parks Congress, 2003). More recently, Lockwood (2010) made a proposal for a new classification system based on seven criteria, some of which are derived from the UNDP criteria (Table 3). The research effort undertaken for Canadian parks uses the UNDP criteria, due to their widely accepted use.

Table 3. Good governance criteria.

Basic principles (UNDP, 1997)	Combined categories (Graham et al., 2003)	Alternative proposal (Lockwood, 2010)
Public participation	Legitimacy and voice	Legitimacy
Consensus orientation		
Strategic vision	Direction	*
Responsiveness	Performance	Accountability
Effectiveness		*
Efficiency		*
Accountability	Accountability	Accountability
Transparency		Transparency
Equity	Fairness	Fairness
Rule of law		Legitimacy
		Inclusiveness
		Connectivity
		Resilience

\*Lockwood (2010) suggests that strategic vision, effectiveness and efficiency are best located in the management domain, rather than the governance domain.

Good governance analysis can be done to confirm that efforts are made to ensure that actual practice fits the accepted criteria (Weiss, 2000). The UNDP governance criteria have been used in many analyses of natural resource management, including water management (Sokhem & Sunada, 2000) and forest management (Agrawal, Chhatre, & Hardin, 2008; Hayes, 2006). However, an assessment of governance in parks and protected areas is generally lacking. Hannah (2006) applied the Graham et al. (2003) framework to private protected areas in Canada and she concluded that the areas studied generally showed good governance, with different levels of competence in each of the categories. Hockings, Stolton, Leverington, Dudley and Courrau (2006) undertook efficiency analysis in protected area management, while more recent research starts to fulfil the research gap of better understanding stakeholder views of various management models (Buteau-Duitschaever, 2009; Buteau-Duitschaever, McCutcheon, Eagles, Havitz, & Glover, 2010; Eagles, 2009; Eagles et al., 2010; McCutcheon, 2009).

Abrams et al. (2003) and Graham et al. (2003) recommend that protected areas engage in participatory governance evaluation processes. Even though this is not the only possible methodology, it would seem the ideal way to proceed, taking into account, as Borrini-Feyerabend et al. (2006, p. 135) state, that “no one better than the relevant social actors (stakeholders) can understand and define what constitutes good governance in a given situation”. Bramwell (2011, p. 475) states that case studies “can be especially valuable for research on the governance of tourism”. Thus, this kind of participatory approach within two case studies was used in the research undertaken in Canada, and is explained in the following sections.

### **Evaluating the perception of governance in two Canadian provincial park systems**

Many governments no longer have the resources to manage their environments (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). This situation occurs in Canada where governments utilize various management models that attempt to shift park management funding from the state to the visitors. Canada’s federal government system has produced a variety of models, allowing this paper to study two contrasting models within one country. British Columbia (BC) uses private companies, whose activities are largely funded by tourism fees, while Ontario (ON) uses a parastatal, which also relies on tourism fees.

Recently, literature has appeared on protected area governance as seen through the views of various stakeholder groups (Buteau-Duitschaever et al., 2010; Eagles et al., 2010). Taking the classification carried out by Eagles (2009) as starting point, it could be possible to make a first approximation to the evaluation of governance criteria within two different management models. Specifically, the parastatal model and the public and for-profit combination model were analysed. The first one, utilized by the ON Provincial Parks, is based on the provision of services by the same park system that carries out the parks’ management. The second one, utilized by the BC Provincial Parks, is based on the hiring of for-profit corporations to deliver all the tourism services while the ownership of the natural resources and recreation facilities remain publicly owned.

ON Provincial Parks moved away from the national park model and adopted the parastatal management model in the mid-1990s. This change in management was a response to the financial cutbacks undertaken by the provincial government provoked by economic recession. Government employees of the park are in charge of overall park management and provide most of the services to the public, while private contractors and licensees provide only select specialized services, such as equipment rentals, garbage pickup and store operation. ON Parks also works closely with cooperating organizations, Friends Groups,



Table 4. Main characteristics of British Columbia and Ontario Provincial Parks.

	British Columbia	Ontario
Total surface (hectares)	13,050,000	9,400,000
Per cent of province	14.26	7.31
Number of parks	972	621
Number of parks with visitor services	206	116
Number of campsites	11,000	19,349
Relative price of use fees	Low	High
Management model	Public and for-profit combination	Parastatal
NGOs' involvement in management	No	Yes

Sources: BC Parks (2010) and Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (2008).

which are non-profit organizations that deliver visitor services such as education and interpretation programmes (Ministry of Natural Resources, 1996; Moos, 2002). This business model has a goal of obtaining cost recovery funding for park management from tourism fees and charges. With this model, the cost recovery derived from tourism fees and charges covers approximately 80% of the total parks' budget, with the ON Provincial Government providing the remaining 20% of operating funds (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, 2008). This heavy reliance on visitor-derived revenue demands high levels of financial efficiency within the provincial parks. Given the heavy reliance on visitor-generated income for budgetary purposes, ON Parks has one of the highest park user fees of all provincial park systems in Canada (Buteau-Duitschaever et al., 2010).

In the case of BC Provincial Parks, the provincial government began to transfer visitor services to for-profit companies in the early 1980s. By 1989, private contractors, known as Park Facility Operators (PFOs), managed all front-country visitor services, such as campgrounds, while the public corporation BC Parks' employees concentrated on planning, ecological and resource management, and monitoring of private contractors (Cavers, 2004; Forum Consulting Group, 2008). BC Parks sets all park fees, which are collected by PFOs. If the fee revenues for the PFOs are less than the agreed-upon operating costs, as it happens in the majority of parks, then BC Parks compensates for the deficit through deficiency payments (Forum Consulting Group, 2008). Deficiency payments enable PFOs to operate a financially viable business while allowing BC Parks to offer visitor services at a very low cost to citizens (McCutcheon, 2009). Thus, government guarantees the economic viability of this outsourcing-based model. Compared to ON Provincial Parks, the BC Parks charge much lower fees, typically from one-quarter to one-half the ON levels (Table 4). The BC fees are regulated by the provincial government and remain at low levels, thus requiring the private operators to be financially efficient through low staffing levels and low wages.

Eagles et al. (2010) report on the findings of governance research specifically on the BC case study. Buteau-Duitschaever et al. (2010) report on a comparison of park visitors' perceptions of governance between ON and BC while Eagles et al. (2011) report on a comparison of park agency staff members' perceptions of governance between ON and BC. This current paper is an overall comparison of all stakeholder groups' perceptions of governance between ON and BC.

## Methods

In order to meet the goal of the research, the opinions of individuals related to the governance of the parks were solicited from five key stakeholder groups: (1) park staff; (2) visitors;

(3) contractors working within a park; (4) nearby residents to provincial parks; and (5) NGOs involved with, or having an interest in, provincial parks. These five were chosen from the 22 provided by Eagles et al. (2002) due to their centrality to park management in the case study areas and in park management more broadly. These opinions were expressed through respondent's level of agreement with standard statements on an electronic survey. Surveys allowed researchers to formulate statistical inferences of population given that the information was collected from a subset of that population (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliot, 2002).

The survey was administered in BC for a three-month period from 1 July to 1 October 2008. Survey recruitment in ON took place from 11 March to 11 May 2009. Data obtained from the completed surveys were analysed in SPSS version 17.

The park staff members were contacted directly through email distribution lists provided by the government agencies in both case study areas. In both cases, staff members were first recruited for the survey, followed by other groups. The contractors were contacted by the researchers through addresses provided by the park agency in BC and by the park agency itself in ON. The park staff and the contractor surveys were a census of the entire population. The visitors were contacted in ON through advertisement in an email communication sent to all park visitors who had registered with the park agency preregistration service. The visitors were contacted in BC through website advertisements. The nearby residents were contacted in BC through website advertisements and in ON through website and local newspaper advertisements. The NGO members were contacted through notices placed on NGO websites in both case studies. When a person agreed to participate, they were sent, via email, the survey address, and a sign-in code to gain access to a computerized research instrument.

The research team designed a survey to investigate stakeholder perspectives of governance and park management issues. The survey was based on the 10 governance criteria, as identified by the UNDP, which served as a framework for the survey. The UNDP criteria were chosen because they were much more detailed and exhaustive than other proposed criteria. Through an extensive literature review, the research team developed three to nine statements for each criterion designed to measure each of the governance criteria (Table 5).

Responses to each statement were measured with a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree; and, 5 = strongly disagree. Also added were the options of "Do not know" and "Not Applicable" for participants that did not know the answer to a question, or, that the questions did not relate to them. Statements referred to the specific provincial park chosen by the respondent from a drop-down list of all operating parks, or to the overall provincial park system in case the person preferred to give his/her opinion about more than one park<sup>1</sup>. In addition each respondent chose from two main management area categories: (1) Park Services and (2) Park Administration and Management (Table 3). Researchers felt that asking participants to select a park and management areas they were most familiar with would allow participants to place each item within the context of their own personal experience. For this paper, the responses from the two management area categories were merged.

## **Results and analysis**

### ***Introduction***

There were 248 surveys collected in BC and 380 in ON. The visitors were the largest group (BC:  $n = 112$ ; ON:  $n = 255$ ) and park staff (BC:  $n = 69$ ; ON:  $n = 63$ ) the second largest

Table 5. Samples of statements included in the survey to stakeholders.

Criteria for good governance	Samples of survey statements to be valued by the stakeholders	References
Public participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The public participation decision-making process in the park is adequate.</li> <li>• Those who wanted to contribute to the public participation process in the park had the opportunity to do so.</li> </ul>	Charmley and Engelbert (2005) Rowe, Marsh and Frewer (2004)
Consensus orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decisions in the park are made by consensus.</li> <li>• The amount of time allotted for decision-making in the park is adequate.</li> </ul>	Wang (2001) DeHoog, Lowery and Lyons (1990) Hornsby, Smith and Gupta (1994) Jones (1986)
Strategic vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park's planning and management fulfils the Provincial Parks mission statement.</li> </ul>	Graham et al. (2003) IUCN (2008)
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park's management plan is being effectively implemented.</li> <li>• Park staff makes a sincere effort to support those visitors who need help.</li> <li>• Park staff responds to requests quickly.</li> </ul>	Glaser and Hildreth (1999) Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988)
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The facilities available in the park are of excellent quality.</li> <li>• Park staff is/are concerned with quality control.</li> </ul>	Crompton and Lamb (1986) Petrick (2002) Vigoda (2000)
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The park has enough employees to handle their responsibilities.</li> <li>• The park provides value for user fees they charge.</li> </ul>	Howat, Absher, Crilley and Milne (2003) MacKay and Crompton (1990) Shneider, Parkington and Buxton (1980)
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am kept informed about park policies.</li> <li>• I am kept informed about major capital projects of the park.</li> </ul>	Kluvers (2003) Schacter (2003) Wang (2002)
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information offered by the park is available at the appropriate level of detail.</li> <li>• Public procurement procedures in the park are open and understandable.</li> </ul>	Bellver and Kaufman (2005) Blagescu, de Las Casas and Lloyd (2005)
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Users of the park receive fair and equal treatment.</li> <li>• I am permitted to use park's services in the same ways as other users.</li> </ul>	Drew and Nyerges (2004) Brewer and Selden (2000) Joshi (1989)
Rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The park controls inappropriate land uses.</li> <li>• The park complies with the letter of the law.</li> </ul>	Kacmar and Ferris (1991) Fraerich (1993) Rowe et al. (2004) Stolton, Hockings, Dudley, MacKinnon and Whitten (2003)

Table 6. Survey responses by stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group	British Columbia		Ontario	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Park staff	69	27.8	63	16.6
Park visitors	112	45.2	255	67.1
Park contractors	22	8.9	8	2.1
Nearby residents	15	6.0	30	7.9
NGO members	30	12.1	24	6.3
Total	248	100	380	100

in both cases (Table 6). Minority groups were nearby residents in the case of BC ( $n = 15$ ) and contractors working within a park context in the case of ON ( $n = 8$ ). The low number of contractor responses in ON is due to the presence of many small contractors providing specific services within ON Parks and a reluctance to participate, unlike BC where a few larger corporations have a significant presence and participated enthusiastically.

With the aim of facilitating the analysis of the data obtained from the surveys, the research team undertook a principal components analysis to determine whether the different statements that made up each governance criteria could be grouped in the same factor. Principal components analysis with varimax rotation reduced the complexity inherent in interpreting 75 individual items and determined the face validity and internal consistency of items within the 10 governance sections. Thus, for eight of the 10 governance criteria, a single factor emerged. The remaining two governance criteria, equity and efficiency, each split into two separate factors. The first of two factors for equity comprised seven items measuring participants' perception of both ON and BC Parks: treating all users with fair and equal treatment; attending the needs of all in a fair basis; the Park has fair procedures for establishing priorities; that the procedures used by the Park to resolve conflict is fair; that all users are permitted to use services; that the tendering process is open to all; and, that the same quality of services is provided to all by the Park. This component was therefore termed Equity-Fairness. The second factor for Equity comprised two items designed to measure whether participants perceive the Park to be providing adequate services because user fees cover the costs; and if participants perceive the Park to be providing adequate services because tax revenues cover the costs. This factor was therefore named Equity-Finance. The first factor for efficiency comprised three items designed to measure if the park provides value for the taxes paid; provides value for user fees charged; and if it is efficient. This factor was named Efficiency-Financial Value. The second factor for efficiency comprised two items designed to measure if the park has enough employees to handle their responsibilities; and if it has too many employees. This factor was named Efficiency-Employees.

The principal components analysis revealed that the 12 factors explained over 66% of the variance (Table 7). The reliability analysis confirmed the grouping of the items for 11 of the 12 governance factors identified in the principal components analysis. Due to a low alpha score (.51) obtained in the Cronbach's alpha analysis undertaken, the second factor (Efficiency-Employees) as defined by the principal components analysis was not further incorporated into any analyses conducted. Convention suggests that internal consistency levels of less than .70 are suspect (Nunnally, 1978) and though some would argue that alpha levels as low as .60 are sufficient for exploratory survey research, the alpha score of .51 falls well short of this standard.

Table 7. Principal components analysis and reliability analysis.

Governance criteria	New factors	Per cent of variance explained	Cronbach's alpha
Responsiveness		69.79	.94
Effectiveness		66.78	.90
Equity	Fairness	47.61	.90
	Finance	19.49	.71
Efficiency	Financial value	40.29	.82
	Employees	26.15	.51
Public participation		68.24	.92
Consensus orientation		76.73	.90
Transparency		74.13	.95
Rule of law		69.74	.91
Accountability		71.94	.93
Strategic vision		81.11	.92

In order to reduce the complexity of the data, the researchers used these 11 factors in the analysis of the different stakeholder groups rather than use each individual item (Table 7). This was determined to be a fair trade-off due to a reduction in the complexity of the data.

#### ***Overall comparison between British Columbia and Ontario***

The evaluation of the perception of governance was carried out using a scale that ranged from 1 to 5. Values closer to 1 represent good governance, and values closer to 5 indicate poor or weak governance, with 3 being a neutral value.

In the BC case, average governance values ranged from 2.52 for equity fairness as the best value, to 3.55 for equity finance as the worst value. This shows a moderate amount of divergence from the neutral point of 3.00. Five factors were ranked above neutral, towards good governance: effectiveness, equity fairness, strategic vision, responsiveness and efficiency financial value. The remaining six factors were ranked below neutral, towards weak governance: transparency, rule of law, accountability, public participation, consensus orientation and equity finance. Although six factors received negative scores, we cannot state they represent bad governance as values were between 3 and 4, not between 4 and 5. The highest level of agreement amongst the respondents was for the factor equity fairness ( $SD = 0.81$ ), while the factor strategic vision generated more disagreement ( $SD = 1.08$ ).

The results for ON show that all factors showed values between 2 and 3, ranging from 2.04 for equity fairness to 2.72 for transparency indicating a small amount of divergence between the highest and the lowest values. For 10 out of the 11 governance factors, standard deviation was between 0.71 and 0.91, indicating good levels of congruency in opinions. Only equity finance ( $SD = 1.02$ ) showed a higher level of disagreement amongst the respondents.

Overall results for all stakeholders showed that the ON Provincial Parks had more positive scores than did the BC Provincial Parks ( $p < .001$ ; Table 8). In other words, the general perception of respondents gave a value closer to good governance (scores closer to 1) to the ON provincial parks system for all 11 factors compared to the BC park system.

#### ***Comparison between British Columbia and Ontario for each stakeholder group***

To further understand the differences for overall perceptions between the two provincial park systems, comparisons were made between corresponding stakeholder groups from each

Table 8. *t*-test comparing BC and ON for 11 governance factors (overall results).

Governance factors	Province	<i>n</i>	Mean <sup>a</sup>	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>																																																																																																																				
Responsiveness	BC	237	2.79	0.90	8.43	605	<.001																																																																																																																				
	ON	370	2.26	0.74				Effectiveness	BC	243	2.73	0.85	9.68	611	<.001	ON	370	2.11	0.71	Equity-Fairness	BC	236	2.52	0.81	7.54	583	<.001	ON	349	2.04	0.71	Equity-Finance	BC	198	3.55	1.02	9.23	469	<.001	ON	273	2.64	1.02	Efficiency-Financial value	BC	239	2.72	0.99	6.82	586	<.001	ON	349	2.19	0.88	Public participation	BC	206	3.04	0.95	5.83	424	<.001	ON	220	2.52	0.87	Consensus orientation	BC	183	3.12	0.97	5.23	369	<.001	ON	188	2.68	0.88	Transparency	BC	201	3.04	0.99	3.59	422	<.001	ON	223	2.72	0.83	Rule of law	BC	226	3.06	0.96	9.86	515	<.001	ON	291	2.32	0.73	Accountability	BC	235	3.02	0.96	4.96	544	<.001	ON	311	2.65	0.91	Strategic vision	BC	241	2.89	1.08	8.50	553	<.001
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<sup>a</sup>Based on five-point scales where lower scores, towards one, represent a positive perception for the governance factors.

provincial system. This comparison often demonstrated statistically significant differences in the perception of certain governance factors.

The park staff comparison between BC and ON Parks (Table 9; please note that tables 9–13 are only available on the online version of this paper at [www.tandfonline.com/JOST](http://www.tandfonline.com/JOST)) revealed that in the ON case, this stakeholder group had positive perceptions (scores between 1 and 3) for all 11 governance factors, while in BC park staff has positive feelings for 10 criteria, but had a negative perception of equity finance (3.48). The ON's park staff members' more positive views were statistically significant for seven of the 11 governance factors when compared to their counterparts in BC Parks ( $p < .05$ ). For the remaining factors, the ON scores were visually more positive for three of the four governance factors. This reveals that the ON parastatal management model is perceived as having more positive governance scores by its staff members, when compared to BC park staff perceptions' of their public and for-profit combination model.

The park visitors' analysis also reveals that the ON model had more positive perceptions than the BC one. In fact, visitors to ON Parks had positive perceptions for all 11 governance factors, while visitors to BC provincial parks had negative perceptions (scores between 3 and 4) for eight of the 11 governance factors. Only three factors were positively ranked in that province: equity fairness, effectiveness and efficiency financial value (Table 10). The observed differences in the perception of the 11 governance factors between ON and BC provincial parks visitors were statistically different from each other ( $p < .001$ ). These results confirm that the parastatal model, which emphasizes service provision for the visitors at market prices, is scored more highly by the ON visitors compared to the BC visitors.

Generally, the contractors provided scores between 2 and 3, indicating positive scores. Importantly, the contractors for both systems provided scores above 3 (BC, 3.36; ON, 3.58) for equity finance, indicating a negative perception of this important criterion. There were no statistically significant differences for park contractors between the two systems (Table 11).

The sample sizes for contractors in both ON and BC were small. In BC, 22 responded to the survey out of the 25 that were members of an organization that represents the interests of the PFOs, the BC Society of Facility Operators. In BC, the contractors' sole responsibility is to provide tourism services in parks and the operators participated enthusiastically in the study. The number of contractor responses from ON was low at eight. It is not possible to know the exact number contacted as this was done by the park agency for the researchers. In ON, most of the contractors who provide maintenance services, such as snow clearing, garbage collection and facility repairs, also provide these services to many other clients and they usually declined to participate. This situation reveals that the response rate corresponded to the centrality of the contractor to park management, with those most central to decision-making most likely to respond.

The nearby residents generally provided scores between 2 and 3, indicating positive scores for both provinces. Specifically, nearby residents in BC perceived six factors negatively (equity finance, public participation, consensus orientation, transparency, rule of law and accountability), while nearby residents in ON had negative perceptions for two factors (transparency and accountability; Table 12). The only statistically significant difference was for rule of law, with the ON nearby residents giving a mildly positive score of 2.47 and the BC nearby residents a mildly negative score of 3.13. At this time, it is unknown why the nearby residents to BC parks express this concern about rule of law. However, recent media reports outline citizens' concerns about very low levels of policing in BC parks due to the number of full-time rangers across the province dropping to only 10 due to budget cuts (Olivier, 2011).

The NGO members showed similar results to the park visitor group. NGOs in ON had positive scores for all the 11 factors, while in BC only three factors received positive scores (equity fairness, public participation and effectiveness; Table 13). The observed differences in mean scores for NGO members between the two provinces were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) for all the governance factors, except for public participation, likely due to a small sample size for that factor in ON. Once more, the parastatal model was perceived most positively.

## Conclusions

It is important to underline that the overall rankings in ON are scored more towards good governance ( $p < .001$ ) for all governance factors compared to BC. Therefore, the ON model is scored higher overall than the BC model by the combined stakeholder data. However, the analysis of the different stakeholder groups' evaluation of governance for each province led to the identification of important similarities and differences between BC and ON.

In BC for six governance factors (efficiency financial value, consensus orientation, transparency, rule of law, accountability and strategic vision), park staff and the park contractors, in this order, have the most positive views, while the other stakeholders, especially the visitors, showed more critical perception. For the factors responsiveness and equity fairness, park staff members have the most positive views and were aligned with the nearby residents, rather than park contractors. For the factors effectiveness and equity finance, the nearby residents and the park contractors have the most positive views. The

NGO members and visitor groups have the most negative views for all factors; the park visitors have the most negative scores for seven factors, while NGO members had the most negative scores for four factors.

In the ON case, the park staff, the visitors and the NGO members have similar positive views, while contractors and the local residents tend to be more negative. This contrasts with BC where the park staff and the contractors were most positive, while the NGO members and the visitors tended to be more negative, with local residents in the mid-range.

In BC, the differences of perception between park staff and park contractors on one side and NGO members and visitors on the other side could be explained by the role that each stakeholder plays in the management framework for the parks. Park staff members carry out the management tasks entrusted to them by the government, while park contractors operate within a management model that supports and encourages their operational procedures; for these reasons, they both value governance within the management model positively. NGO members and visitors play a secondary role in management and therefore, have a significantly different and more critical perception of governance than park staff or contractors. There is a history of conflict in BC between the NGOs and the government, with the NGOs complaining about being left out of major decisions (McCutcheon, 2009). Also, BC has a very small Friends' Group operation, providing little direct opportunity for park visitors to volunteer for park management activities. Typically, nearby residents' perception of governance was observed to be in the middle of both extremes, with the exception of equity finance. Nearby residents perceived this factor most positively. However, this perception on behalf of nearby residents is relative since this is the only criterion that received a value of 3 (nearby residents) or higher than 3 (the other groups), suggesting that in reality almost all the groups have a negative perception regarding this aspect.

For all criteria in ON, the visitors' and NGO members' scores do not diverge from those of park staff ( $p < .05$ ). This suggests that the ON model shows cooperative and responsive relationships with the two very critical stakeholder groups that are normally considered outside management – the citizens who become tourists and visit the parks and those who join park-related NGOs. This finding may be partially the result of a long history of cooperative management in the ON park system, with NGOs playing a constructive role in the creation of park policy in concert with the government and the park agency staff members (Killan, 1993). Also, ON has an NGO system built into park management, the Friend's Groups, which allows park visitors to volunteer their time towards worthwhile park activities, such as the provision of environmental education programmes. We feel that the NGO scores in ON are influenced by the Friend's Group responses, a group largely non-existent in BC. Since the creation of the parastatal management structure in ON was built on consensus amongst many stakeholder groups during years of negotiation in the mid-1990s, with park staff and NGOs having central roles (Eagles, 1998; Moos, 2002), it may not be surprising that the resultant model is perceived positively by those stakeholder groups. Conversely, the BC model is typically perceived as one that was imposed by governments without sincere stakeholder involvement (McCutcheon, 2009).

Overall in ON and BC, the park staff members also had the most optimistic vision of governance for their park system. This suggests that the members of this stakeholder group have largely accepted the management model in which they work.

When comparing the visitor scores for ON and BC in the cases of equity fairness (2.02; 2.66), efficiency financial value (2.18; 2.97) and equity finance (2.52; 3.54), the ON visitors showed a more positive perception of these equity and financial criteria ( $p < .001$ ). This is a significant finding since the ON visitors pay some of the highest park use fees in Canada,



while the BC visitors pay some of the lowest. Scholars often state that higher fees reduce equity (More, 2005), but this research contradicts that statement. We suggest that those who pay directly for the park tourism services perceive higher levels of good governance in equity and financial efficiency partially because they receive better levels of service that are tailored to their needs (Crompton & Lamb, 1986).

In ON, park contractors had a more negative perception of the governance criteria, while in BC the park contractors had more positive perceptions. The contractors in ON have relatively limited roles in management, when compared to BC where they have central roles. We wonder if centrality to decision-making results in more positive views on governance, and vice versa in the contractors. This centrality to decision-making may also be involved in influencing the views of the visitors and the NGO members.

This research confirms the findings of Lemos and Agrawal (2006) that a partnership with private actors, in this case private companies in BC, appears to be attractive, but raises some concerns. This partnership seems to undermine social goals, stakeholder participation and causes a concern about accountability (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). In BC, the park agency staff members are focused on the management of the contractors, while the contractors are most concerned about the details of that supervision (McCutcheon, 2009). This two-person dance leaves out the other key stakeholders, and especially the NGO members and the visitors. Importantly, the park visitors who use the leisure services provided by the private sector and fund the private operators through their fees, express concern about key governance principles.

This research reveals that the parastatal form of park management, which was created through a long period of negotiation amongst key stakeholder groups in ON, provides higher levels of governance scores. Even though the cost of using the parks is higher, the user-group stakeholders (visitors and NGO members) accept this situation because they helped design the system, they can have a positive role in park management if they desire and they see value in the leisure products produced. Therefore, the positive outcome is not just about the tourism product utilized by the public, but it is also about the management processes that create that product. Public recreation on public land appears to be best provided by a management model in which the key stakeholders, including the users, feel that they have a positive role. This suggests that the ON approach may be more of a participant-led network that better balances efficiency versus inclusiveness, internal versus external legitimacy and flexibility versus stability, the key tensions identified by Beaumont and Dredge (2009), than the BC approach.

Protected areas will only be conserved for future generations if good governance and good management exist. Protected areas will be best managed through an appropriate understanding of benefits and drawbacks of the different management models used. The evaluation of governance of protected areas will contribute to Abrams et al.'s (2003) request: (1) to find solutions to management challenges; (2) to ensure accountability and conserve financial and material resources; (3) to determine whether a change in governance structure and process is due; and (4) to identify the most appropriate governance system in the face of global change. This Canadian research contributes to a better understanding of those issues. This research provides direction to the challenge of the removal of government funding for management and its replacement by tourism fees and charges. It appears that the park visitors are willing to bear a larger share of the costs of park management, but in turn wish to see good levels of transparency and accountability. They wish to see a management structure that is responsive to their needs and is financially effective. They wish to see good levels of public participation in management, with an overall consensus orientation within an accepted strategic vision. This process involves not only the day-by-day delivery

of tourism services, but also the larger management structure and management activities of the park.

This case study of the perception of governance by stakeholders in the BC and ON Provincial Parks provides new knowledge to this field and allows for a comparison between two very important management models: the public and for-profit model and the parastatal model. This analysis shows how, generally speaking, the parastatal management model adopted by the provincial parks system of ON has the best overall perception of governance compared to the model adopted by the BC provincial parks, based on outsourcing (a combined public and for-profit management model). Nevertheless, both park systems offer positive general results, confirming the theoretical evaluation done by Eagles (2009).

This research revealed that the 10 governance criteria outlined by the UNDP (1997) may actually form 12 criteria in regards to parks, with two sub-categories within each of the governance criteria of efficiency and equity. The finding of 12 criteria provides for a more precise and nuanced view of governance than would occur if the Graham et al. (2003) approach of only five criteria had been used. This study confirms that the utilization of the 10 UNDP criteria (UNDP, 1997) is preferable to the five proposed by Graham et al. (2002). The strong similarity between ON and BC in regards to the creation of 12 criteria through statistical analysis of the data suggests that the research instrument has validity in different circumstances.

The results provide valuable information that can be used in different ways on behalf of the different stakeholders. Those stakeholders more directly related to the decision-making process (park staff and contractors in BC, and park staff and NGOs in ON) can use the findings for introducing management improvements to enhance those governance criteria that are more weakly valued. Those stakeholders less related to the decision-making process (visitors and nearby residents in both cases, and also NGOs in the BC case and contractors in the ON case) can use the findings for making suggestions of improvement for both management models in order to take into account their needs. In any case, findings make evident for both management models analysed the need for a greater participation in the decision-making process and a greater implication in the management process on behalf of the stakeholder groups.

This research suggests that the outsourcing of park tourism services to the for-profit private sector may be inferior to the insourcing of those sources within government, using a parastatal form of management. This is a significant finding internationally as private corporations are normally considered to be the appropriate approach when governments outsource park tourism management (More, 2005).

This research also concludes that giving park visitors a direct role in park management through involvement in organized NGOs, Friends Groups, provides for a more positive perception of governance. In ON the Friends Groups are influential in the delivery of environmental education programs, services almost absent in BC. We suggest that the delivery of those services provides an enhanced visitor experience that may lead to more positive scores by both the visitors and the NGO members, as found in ON.

Newig and Fritsch (2009) maintain that an important aspect of governance is the participation of non-state actors. Bramwell and Lane (2009, p. 4) state that: "The advocates of sustainable tourism have always put much emphasis on widening participation in decision-making". Our research suggests that the parastatal form of park management is more successful in involving a suite of key non-state actors, such as NGO members and park visitors, than is the private, profit-making model.

Hall (2011, p. 451) highlights "the importance of accuracy and consistency in addressing key concepts in tourism as well as ensuring that they are used in a manner that allows for

comparison in non-tourism fields". We feel that the use of a widely utilized set of governance criteria from the UNDP and well-defined survey statements based on the literature provides for accuracy and consistency in our research that can be replicated in future research in both tourism and non-tourism fields.

It would be useful to conduct similar studies with other examples of the two management models investigated in this study, and with other models. This would assess if the findings of this research are applicable more broadly.

In short, the research described contributes not only to bridge the gap in the field of evaluating governance of protected areas, but also to deepen the knowledge of new methodologies of socio-economic and socio-environmental analysis in the management of protected areas. Those methodologies could be subsequently applied to other geographical regions and to other management models. At the same time, they can provide guidelines for improving the governance and the management of protected areas by governments and institutions involved in the management of natural environment and its public use. Those guidelines should stress the strengths and weaknesses of each management model, as well as considering the opinion and perception of the different stakeholders that, ineluctably, should have their say within all the management processes.

Achievements and progresses in this field could be the starting point of a future standardized system of evaluation and certification of governance of protected areas, being applicable at the international level. This could lead to normative standards being developed for each of the governance criteria. Eventually, the scientific knowledge created around this issue should also be the grounds of a wider social learning process that contributed to the improvement of governance for park management.

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### Note

1. For more details on the methodology of elaboration and realization of surveys, see Buteau-Duitschaever (2009) and Eagles et al. (2010).

### Notes on contributor

Paul Eagles, PhD, Mark Havitz, PhD, Troy Glover, PhD, and Bonnie McCutcheon, MA, are at the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, Canada. Francesc Romagosa, PhD, is at the Department of Geography, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain. Windekind Buteau-Duitschaever, MA, is at the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada. This team has a research interest in park governance.

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