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## Camp plan cancelled for Meditation Lake

By CBC News

*A proposed \$10-million camp complex near Meditation Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park has been scrapped by the Manitoba government and Tim Hortons.*

A proposed \$10-million camp near Meditation Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park has been scrapped by the Manitoba government and Tim Hortons.

The decision was announced Thursday by Conservation Minister Stan Struthers and Dave Newnham, vice-president of the Tim Horton Children's Foundation.

Results of water testing at Meditation Lake over the past summer indicated the area would not meet the criteria for the development of a major, year-round camp, Struthers said.

Work is underway to identify another Whiteshell site, he said.

Once a location has been chosen, the public will be consulted through open houses, Struthers said.

The area at Meditation Lake will continue to provide a walk-in camping experience and access to the backcountry. There are no plans for development, he added.

The camp for underprivileged youth was first announced in April by Manitoba Conservation and the Tim Hortons Children's Foundation, and came under immediate criticism from wilderness preservation groups.

### Delicate ecosystem

Environmentalists said the area is a delicate ecosystem and it should not be developed before proper consultation, research and testing.

Critics took offence at the government's decision to clear away trees and build a road to the proposed site before consulting anyone.

Struthers told CBC News in May that the road was part of a larger plan to improve access to provincial parks and not tied to the camp proposal.

**'The public review held in the spring on the Meditation Lake proposal provided many valuable suggestions that will be considered in the review of an alternative site.'** *Stan Struthers, Conservation Minister*

Public consultations and open houses were ultimately held regarding the camp plan, and Struthers said on Thursday that those comments will play a part in the choice of another site.

"We will look at an alternate location in the Whiteshell to meet the program and wilderness-experience needs required by the youth leadership camp proposal, while keeping in mind the needs of current and future park visitors," Struthers said.

"The public review held in the spring on the Meditation Lake proposal provided many valuable suggestions that will be considered in the review of an alternative site."

The goal of the Tim Horton camp is to help provide underprivileged youth the opportunity to learn lifelong leadership skills through activities and experience in wilderness settings.

The proposed camp would host youth aged 13 to 17 in a leadership summer program and could be available year-round to Manitoba school children and organizations that provide strong environmental programs, Struthers said.

"We appreciate the support of the provincial government in working to find and evaluate alternative sites in the Whiteshell," Newnham said.

"We are confident another site will be found that will respect the environmental sustainability needs of the park, and provide a unique experience for children and youth from economically disadvantaged homes."

Open houses in Winnipeg and Whiteshell Provincial Park will be announced later this fall to review a new proposal.

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