

High molybdenum price 'endangers' Purcell Wilderness

Sun Victoria Bureau

VICTORIA — NDP lands and parks critic Gordon Hanson expressed concern Wednesday that the 325,000-acre Purcell Wilderness Conservancy in the Kootenays is in danger because, "the price of molybdenum has shot through the roof."

"Five years ago when the NDP established the conservancy, the London Metal Exchange listed molybdenum at \$2.85 a pound. The price in August is \$22 a pound," said Hanson.

"That spectacular increase has obviously caused the mining companies to exert pressure on the Social Credit government," he said. "The Purcell Wilderness Conservancy is apparently going to have its boundaries re-drawn as a result."

Last week, staff of the energy, mines and petroleum ministry confirmed that a report is being prepared on mineral re-

sources in that area and should be ready by Sept. 1.

"The report is about molybdenum and other metals in the area but I can't say anything more than that," said a senior ministry official.

Hanson (NDP-Victoria) noted in a press release that logging operations in the conservancy were also under consideration. "The rich stands of timber at Carney

Creek are only accessible by re-drawing of the boundaries. Such a move would be nothing short of a disaster," Hanson claimed.

Sierra Club spokesman Rosemary Fox expressed the same concerns over the Purcell area last week, claiming a public hearing should be held before any boundary changes are made.

Hanson also said full public hearings should be held if the government has any plans to alter the status or the boundaries of the area.

Last month, Lands, Parks and Housing Minister Jim Chabot's office announced that a staff review was underway which would cover everything from environmental management to "boundary problems, if any."

The Purcell area is located northeast of Kimberley and to the west of Kootenay Lake. It was established by the NDP gov-

ernment in 1974. It is the only wilderness conservancy in B.C., said Hanson.

"The order-in-council setting up the conservancy recognized the uniqueness of the area," he said.

"It contains outstanding examples of scenery and natural history which have been previously untouched by commercial activity. In fact, to ensure that the wilderness would be kept in its primitive state, the use of combustion engines, even recreational vehicles was prohibited," he said.