



BACKGROUND

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Canada's Opportunity to Unite Behind Protection for Nature

Five key priorities for federal action to Make Room for Nature

Canada's nature sustains and unites us as a country. From providing clean air and water to safeguarding our iconic wildlife; from storing carbon to protecting communities from the impacts of climate change; from sustaining rural economies and Indigenous cultures to promoting health and wellbeing; Canada's land and oceans play a vital role in Canadians' lives. The imperative to protect Nature resonates deeply with Canadians' core values, and unifies people across partisan and regional lines.

But Nature is under threat. One million species around the globe are at risk of extinction, many within decades.¹ In Canada half of all monitored species have declined since 1970, many by over 80%.² The loss of species on this scale threatens our life support systems and requires urgent action. Canada, with 30% of the world's boreal forest, 20% of the world's freshwater resources, and one of the largest marine territories, has a unique opportunity and responsibility to protect its expansive wilderness—not just for our own sake, but for the future of the planet.

Canada is well-positioned to fulfill its potential as a global conservation superpower. Through nation-wide efforts, there has been significant recent progress towards achieving Canada's Target 1 goal of protecting 17% of land and inland waters and 10% of oceans by 2020. We have achieved and surpassed the marine protection target and increased terrestrial protection to just over 12%. In 2018 the federal government announced \$1.3 billion to support protected areas and species at risk—the biggest nature investment in Canadian history. This investment is leveraging additional funding from private foundations and facilitating a groundswell of action by provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments and non-government partners. Canada also co-chairs the working group on the post 2020 framework for the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. At home and abroad, Canada has signalled a commitment to global leadership and to leaving a legacy for generations to come.

¹ As documented by the Intergovernmental Science Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) May 2019 <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>

² World Wildlife Fund Canada. (2017). Living Planet Report Canada

This vision is entirely achievable. We must maintain our momentum, engage Indigenous communities as full partners, and respond to the growing demand from Canadians to make room for Nature.

Five key areas require bold action. The federal government should work to ensure the following commitments in Ministers' mandate letters, the Throne Speech, and federal budget 2020:

1. Adopt and achieve ambitious targets for protected areas.

Protected and conserved areas are our most effective policy tools to safeguard habitat. There is growing scientific evidence that we must conserve between 30% and 70% of land, freshwater, and oceans in order to maintain the ecosystems that support our wellbeing. Canada has made strong progress in recent years but must continue working for completion of the 17% terrestrial protection target by the end of 2020 while simultaneously taking action to ensure 25% of land and ocean is protected in Canada by 2025, and 30% of land and oceans protected by 2030. We are pleased the new government committed to these targets during the recent election campaign. We look forward to working collaboratively to achieve these conservation outcomes. Canada should champion these targets at the international level and join other leading countries in the newly formed High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

2. Commit to Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship of protected areas.

Support for Indigenous-led conservation must lie at the heart of Canada's Nature agenda if we are to make meaningful progress towards reconciliation and biodiversity preservation. Canada should champion and fund Indigenous Protected Areas and stewardship of these areas through Indigenous Guardians and other initiatives, as part of a commitment to the equitable and effective management of protected areas that respects the rights, responsibilities and interests of Indigenous peoples.

3. Ensure protected areas are planned and managed for ecological integrity in accordance with internationally accepted minimum protection standards

To deliver conservation results, protected and conserved areas must be effectively and equitably managed for ecological integrity. To achieve this, connectivity, representivity, retention of intact ecosystems, protection of key biodiversity areas, and conservation of culturally important areas and keystone species must be considered in protected area expansion, creation, and network design. The federal government should employ definitions and guidance from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as minimum standards of protection for protected areas and other effective conservation measures (OECMS). Protection should mean protection.

4. Tackle biodiversity loss and climate change as deeply connected environmental crises.

As recognized during the election campaign natural areas—such as forests, wetlands, oceans and grasslands—are a critical part of the climate solution. The new federal government can prioritize conservation action and nature-based solutions that address the twin goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and stemming biodiversity loss, as highlighted by the campaign commitment to invest \$3

billion in measures to better conserve and restore natural areas. The federal government should maintain a dual emphasis on protecting biodiverse areas that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and on integrating ecosystem-based solutions into Canada's climate change accounting and strategy.

5. Scale up conservation investments for long-term success.

Scaled-up and long-term investment is urgently needed to achieve the goals the government has set for tackling biodiversity loss and climate change. The \$1.3 billion investment in conservation in 2018 was historic and much-needed. Indigenous governments, local communities, landowners, nature groups and others are ready to help as partners. More than \$800 million in proposals were put forward for the \$175 million that was recently committed through the Nature Fund. **The Green Budget Coalition (GBC) recommends investments in Nature of \$934 million in the 2020-21 federal budget, and a further \$2.3 billion over the subsequent three years, as well as the creation of a \$1 billion Nature Based Climate Solutions Fund over four years** to support actions that reduce emissions, sequester carbon, or furnish adaptation benefits while also conserving biodiversity.³

Supporting Organizations: Nature Canada, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), David Suzuki Foundation, Natural Resources Defense Council and Birds Canada.

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³ These figures are based on GBC assessments of what will be needed to position Canada for success in achieving the 30/30 targets, including evidenced-based planning for conservation networks, as well as implementation of on-going protected area management and other key conservation measures.