



March 3, 2022

The Honourable Stephen Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada
The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Natural Resources Canada
The Honourable Dominique Leblanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities
The Honourable Marco Mendocino, Minister of Public Safety

Dear Ministers,

Nature Canada welcomes your government's commitment to develop a National Adaptation Strategy this year.

Canada urgently needs a comprehensive and coordinated plan to protect Canadians from the increasingly damaging impacts of climate change.

The new IPCC Climate Assessment report is clear: climate change already constitutes a major threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet, and any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future

That means accelerating emission reductions and the transition away from fossil fuels, expanding the protection and restoration of climate-critical ecosystems like primary forests, grasslands, wetlands, and advancing comprehensive ecosystem-based adaptation plans that focus on nature-based solutions.

To maximize the human, biodiversity and climate benefits of the National Adaptation Strategy, we urge you to put the protection and restoration of nature at its centre. We are heartened that one of the five key themes for the strategy is to build a thriving natural environment.

Protecting and restoring nature is critical for two reasons.

First, as the IPCC report makes clear, climate change - combined with pollution, habitat destruction and overexploitation of nature - is compounding the current crisis of species extinction and biodiversity loss. Sea level rise, marine and land heatwaves, and expanding wildfires are degrading habitats and ecosystems, disrupting migration patterns and natural cycles, and increasing disease and mortality. As human activity drives climate change, humans have a responsibility to support the adaptation of all species.



Second, the destruction of nature is threatening our own survival. We depend on the health of other species and their ecosystems for food, water, health and much of our economic well-being. Successful adaptation to climate change depends on maintaining and leveraging both the climate mitigation and adaptation services provided by healthy ecosystems. We need healthy forests to absorb carbon, prevent erosion, and cool our towns and cities. We depend on grasslands and wetlands to prevent flooding and droughts. And we need healthy coastal ecosystems to protect coastline communities from erosion and sea rise.

Quite simply, humans cannot successfully adapt to climate change unless we halt and reverse the degradation and destruction of natural ecosystems. The two crises are inextricably linked. We applaud that your government has committed to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 leading to nature's full recovery by 2050, alongside our critical climate targets

Nature Canada urges you to put the protection and restoration of nature at the centre of the framework for Canada's National Adaptation Strategy.

To that end, we recommend that Canada's Strategy include the following five key commitments:

1. Assess, understand and communicate the economic, cultural, health and ecological benefits of Canada's natural ecosystems

- Develop a common approach to valuing natural assets and ecosystem services.
- Complete mapping and inventory of current status of habitats including wetlands, grasslands, peatlands, forests, and coastal areas.
- Improve the accuracy and transparency of the measurement, reporting and regulation of ecosystem-related carbon emissions and removals (e.g. peatlands, grasslands and forests).
- Initiate a public awareness campaign to build understanding of the critical importance of ecosystems to climate adaptation.

2. Embed adaptation in a whole-of-government action plan to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030

- Successful adaptation depends on maintaining and restoring key ecosystems including forests, grasslands, wetlands, peatlands and coastal areas.
- Canada has committed to work towards halting and reversing nature loss by 2030.
- To achieve this it needs to develop and implement, in consultation with Indigenous people and all levels of government, a comprehensive, science-based Action Plan with



targets, timelines and accountability measures to address and reverse the key drivers of ecosystem degradation and destruction.

- This Plan should include efforts to mainstream nature in economic and financial decision making, including the application of biodiversity lens to planning, investment, infrastructure and other adaptation decisions across all federal departments and agencies.
- The National Adaptation Strategy should align with, and advance, the Action Plan to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030.

3. Ensure the value of ecosystem services is incorporated in adaptation-related decision-making

- Support the expansion of natural asset assessments and accounting by municipal governments.
- Ensure all federal infrastructure programs require that negative impacts to ecological connectivity be prevented and mitigated.
- Continue the shift away from GDP in budget making towards a quality of life framework - including the natural environment - that better reflects the goals of improving well-being.

4. Develop and expand initiatives to better protect, restore, and manage nature in ways that maximize adaptation benefits

- Protect and Connect:
 - Consider adaptation and ecosystem benefits as key factors in identifying new protected areas, IPCAs, and priority places for species at risk, including the need for increasing connectivity between protected areas and enhancing ecological corridors or green infrastructure that aid the movement of species.
 - Address habitat loss and fragmentation in order to help species adapt to the climate crisis, through the establishment of a new connectivity fund to support programs for public lands and financial incentives for private lands to conserve areas important for ecological connectivity.
 - Build adaptation considerations into monitoring and ongoing management of protected areas.
 - Renew funding for the National Heritage Conservation Program.
- Restore:
 - Prioritize restoration of ecosystems/species most affected by climate change.
 - Incorporate a consideration of adaptation benefits in the implementation of 2 Billion Trees, Indigenous Guardians, Coastal Restoration Fund, Nature Smart



Climate Solutions Fund, and Community-Nominated Priority Places (CNPP) for Species at Risk, and Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk programs.

- Establish a new Federal Habitat Restoration Fund to support new wetland restoration activities in targeted areas in order to stem habitat degradation and loss of associated climate protection services.
- Increase investments in the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk.
- Manage and Adapt:
 - Increase funding for the Natural Infrastructure Fund.
 - Expand natural infrastructure funding through Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund.
 - Ensure land use, development and resource management policies and practices advance resilience to climate change.
 - Improve equity of access to nature in urban areas.
 - Expand international climate finance for biodiversity, with a 50% allocation for adaptation.
 - Develop a pan-Canadian Soil Health Strategy.

5. Inform the National Adaptation Strategy with key principles

- Respect Indigenous rights and title and advance reconciliation.
- Engage and prioritize the needs of species and communities most affected by climate change.
- Support climate mitigation (reduction of emissions).
- Advance ecosystem connectivity.

Thank you again for working to protect Canadians and our living systems from the growing climate threat. We look forward to engaging our large network of nature groups and concerned individuals in the upcoming consultation process for the National Adaptation Strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Saul".

Graham Saul, Executive Director

cc: Deputy Ministers in all above Departments