

Recasting Canada as an environmental leader

Recommendations and briefings for federal parties in 2015

Submitted by Canada's leading national environmental organizations¹

Fall 2014

The 2015 federal election offers an opportunity for Canadians to signal their resolve to restore and strengthen protection of the rich, yet threatened, ecosystems and clean air and safe water that sustain our economy and the lives of all global citizens. As a first step in this vital renewal, our national coalition offers these recommendations and background briefings to all federal parties to inform the development of their environmental policy platforms.

Policy recommendations

1. Environmental laws and rights: Rebuild and strengthen Canada's environmental laws in an open, collaborative manner, informed by best available science and indigenous knowledge, to safeguard our land, air, water and species. Also, recognize environmental rights. (Briefing 1)

2. Terrestrial and marine conservation: Meet or exceed our international commitments by committing to protect 20% of Canada's wilderness and at least 10% of our ocean areas by 2020, on the road to protecting at least half of Canada's wilderness on land and at sea. (Briefing 2)

3. Climate and energy: Price carbon: Implement a price for carbon emissions covering all sectors of the economy and eliminate all remaining subsidies for fossil fuels, including liquefied natural gas for export. (Briefing 3)

4. Climate and energy: Transition the economy: Accelerate our transition to an energy-efficient and prosperous, clean-energy economy that protects Canada's ecological wealth. (Briefing 3)

5. Climate and energy: Global leadership: Play a leading role in securing a fair, ambitious and lasting global climate agreement with legal force in 2015, and introduce a domestic action plan for Canada to reach or exceed the newly agreed targets for reduction of carbon emissions, as well as those agreed to under the Copenhagen Accord. Also, contribute at least \$400 million in 2015 and 2016 toward climate-change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries with specific steps to scaling this up to a fair contribution toward the collective \$100 billion in 2020. (Briefing 3)

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¹ Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, Environmental Defence, Greenpeace Canada, Nature Canada, Pembina Institute, Sierra Club Canada, World Wildlife Fund and West Coast Environmental Law.

Briefing 1: Environmental Laws and Rights

Submitted by Canada's leading national environmental organizations

October 2014

Recommendation: Rebuild and strengthen Canada's environmental laws in an open, collaborative manner, informed by best available science and Indigenous knowledge, to safeguard our land, air, water and species. Also, recognize environmental rights.

Background: Many of Canada's most important federal environmental laws have been eliminated or weakened in recent years: among them, our *Environmental Assessment Act*, *Fisheries Act*, *Kyoto Protocol*, *Navigable Waters Protection Act*, *National Energy Board Act* and *Species At Risk Act*. Many species are in danger of extinction or extirpation, yet only the federal government can protect them fully. The federal government also has a key role in ensuring Canadians know that their water and air are clean and safe. Enshrining the right to a healthy environment in the Canadian Charter would lead to better environmental performance and help guard against environmental laws being weakened.

Commitments required:

1. Rebuild and strengthen Canada's environmental laws and recognize environmental rights, so as to:

- a) Ensure all proposed development requiring federal approval contributes to sustainability, that the public is properly consulted in the assessment and decision-making, and that the cumulative, regional impacts of projects are fully evaluated;
- b) Protect all fish and their habitat in all lakes, rivers and marine waters in Canada;
- c) Strengthen and fully implement Canada's species at risk legislation, allowing for appropriate levels of funding for COSEWIC, recovery strategies and use of federal safety net to protect species where federal leadership is required.
- d) Enshrine in Canada's Charter our right to a healthy environment.

2. With provinces and First Nations, protect the flows and quality of Canada's freshwater, including:

- a) Regular, independent monitoring, assessment of and reporting on water quality;
- b) Establishment of and reporting on water flow requirements for ecosystem health;
- c) Support for communities in adapting to the impacts of climate change;
- d) Applying the polluter-pays principle to protect water;
- e) Development of a legal and policy framework that requires accountability; and
- f) Strong public involvement in decision-making.

3. Develop environmental laws in an open and collaborative manner, so that they:

- a) Are informed by scientific evidence, Indigenous knowledge and precautionary principle;
- b) Ensure citizens' voices are heard in decision-making and the Crown's constitutional duties to aboriginal peoples are upheld; and
- g) Entrench requirements for science-based monitoring and public reporting.

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Briefing 2: Terrestrial and Marine Conservation

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Recommendation: Meet or exceed our international commitments by committing to protect 20% of Canada's wilderness and at least 10% of our ocean areas by 2020, on the road to protecting at least half of Canada's wilderness on land and at sea.

Background: Wilderness and nature are core to Canada's identity and a legacy of global significance. Canada is home to at least 20% of the world's remaining wilderness and 7% of its renewable fresh water. Our national parks are beloved by Canadians and people worldwide. We have the longest coastlines in the world, and are responsible for managing more of the world's ocean than any other country. Canada's boreal forest is the largest and most intact forest ecosystem left on Earth. With demand for Canada's resources increasing dramatically, and the climate changing rapidly, the pressures on our amazing natural heritage have never been greater.

Commitments required:

As a signatory to the International Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada has promised to protect at least 17% of its land and 10% of its marine habitat by 2020. As of today, we protect just 10% of land and 1% of oceans. To overcome this neglect of our natural heritage, the federal government must:

- a) Complete a system of national parks that protects examples of all of Canada's natural landscapes (new parks by 2020)
- b) Establish new National Wildlife Areas to protect threatened ecosystems such as prairie grasslands and properly fund management of the existing network of NWAs.
- c) Refocus on protecting nature in our federal protected areas, including national parks, as the first management priority (e.g., Greater Toronto's Rouge National Urban Park).
- d) Double the amount of ocean protected areas to 3% of Canada's oceans during the next term of government and publish a plan, with budgets and timelines, for a network of marine protected areas that meets our 10% targets. Establish an arctic sanctuary of protected areas that will allow our most sensitive northern ecosystems to survive and benefit future generations
- e) With provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments, spearhead a national effort, informed by science-based conservation planning, to complete a system of connected, protected areas that contributes significantly to global biodiversity, helps wildlife adapt to climate change, and achieve all of the above goals.

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Briefing 3: Climate and energy
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Recommendations:

- 1) **Price carbon:** Implement a price for carbon emissions covering all sectors of the economy and eliminate all remaining subsidies for fossil fuels, including liquefied natural gas for export;
- 2) **Transition the economy:** Accelerate our transition to an energy-efficient and prosperous, clean-energy economy that protects Canada's ecological wealth;
- 3) **Climate and energy: Global leadership:** Play a leading role in securing a fair, ambitious and lasting global climate agreement with legal force in 2015, and introduce a domestic action plan for Canada to reach or exceed the newly agreed targets for reduction of carbon emissions, as well as those agreed to under the Copenhagen Accord. Also, contribute at least \$400 million in 2015 and 2016 toward climate-change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries with specific steps to scaling this up to a fair contribution toward the collective \$100 billion in 2020.

Background: The World Bank, Canadian Council of Chief Executives and Canadian Chamber of Commerce now support a "carbon price" as the most efficient way to shrink carbon pollution. Accelerating Canada's transition to a clean-energy economy will create jobs, economic activity and tax revenue and, in the long term, allow us to compete in global markets evermore reliant on renewables. By taking a leading role in the Paris climate talks in 2015 and funding climate adaptation (e.g., through the Green Climate Fund) Canada would signal it belated recognition of the true costs of inaction on climate and begin to restore its battered international image.

Commitments required:

- 1) Implement an economy-wide price on carbon, starting at a modest level and rising predictably to cover the social and environmental cost of carbon. Implement this with incentives for innovation and reduced emissions and compensation for low-income families, and direct revenue to other measures listed here.
- 2) Eliminate all remaining fossil fuel subsidies and refuse to provide any new tax or other fiscal subsidies to oil, gas or mining, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) for export.
- 3) Work with provinces to phase out coal-fired generation by 2030, by developing a national strategy to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- 4) Invest in infrastructure and incentives to boost demand for transit and electric vehicles.
- 5) Help homeowners and landlords, in low-income areas especially, to increase energy-efficiency and boost job creation Canada-wide by funding a Green Homes Strategy.
- 6) Show leadership at 2015 Paris climate negotiations by advancing credible targets, based on an ambitious domestic action plan underpinning the targets agreed at the Paris talks.

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