



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

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PETITION No.: **421-02401**

BY: **Ms. QUACH (SALABERRY—SUROIT)**

DATE: **JUNE 1, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **THE HONOURABLE CATHERINE MCKENNA**

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Response by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Protection of the environment**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

Wetland conservation in Canada is a responsibility shared by all levels of government (federal, provincial, territorial and municipal), and policies and strategies exist at all these levels. At the federal level, the primary goal of the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation is to promote the conservation of Canada's wetlands to sustain their ecological and socio-economic functions now and in the future. Specifically, the federal government is committed to achieving the goal of no net loss of wetland functions on all federal lands and waters. It is also committed to recognizing wetland functions in resource planning, management and economic decision-making with regard to all federal programs, policies and activities.

There are several federal programs that can provide support for wetland conservation. For example, one of the cornerstones of wetland conservation in Canada is the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). Since 1986, more than \$2.3 billion has been invested in the implementation of the NAWMP in Canada by various public and private partners resulting in the protection of over 8.5 million hectares of wetlands and associated habitats. Other federal programs offer support for wetland conservation as well such as the Coastal Restoration Fund, the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program, EcoAction, the Species at Risk Habitat Stewardship Program, the Community Interaction Program of the St. Lawrence Action Plan, the Great Lakes Protection Initiative, the Lake

Winnipeg Basin Program and the Gulf of Maine Initiative. Most recently, between September 2014 and March 31, 2017, almost \$25.5 million in federal funding was allocated to some 200 National Wetland Conservation Fund projects. Over the same period, more than 2,600 hectares of wetlands and associated habitats were restored and over 340,000 hectares of wetlands were enhanced thereby improving water quality for the benefit of fish, waterfowl and other wildlife species. As a result, many of these stakeholder collaborations are pursuant to objectives listed in the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation's objectives.

Recognizing the importance of wetlands, Canada became a Contracting Party to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, also known as the Ramsar Convention, in 1981. The objective of the Convention is to reduce the loss of wetlands and ensure their conservation and sustainable use for future generations. The Contracting Parties undertake, inter alia, to work for the wise use of all their wetlands, to inscribe appropriate wetlands on the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the "Ramsar List") and to ensure their good management. Canada currently has thirty-seven sites on the Ramsar List with a total area of more than 13 million hectares. Twenty-one of these sites are located in whole or in part in federal protected areas either in national parks, national wildlife areas or migratory bird sanctuaries. One of these sites is the Lake Saint Francis National Wildlife Area, managed by the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climate Change Canada. Created in 1978, this 1,316-hectare reserve aims to preserve a unique set of wetlands with exceptionally diverse flora and fauna.

There are eight municipalities around Lake Saint-François with a total area of over 49,000 hectares. Of this area, just over 14% is wetland. The municipality of Saint-Zotique has a little more than 380 hectares of wetlands. National Wildlife Areas can only be established on federal properties and most of the Lake Saint-François wetlands are not located on federal properties. At this time, the Government of Canada has no plans to create a new protected area near Lake Saint-François.

Given the division of responsibilities between levels of government and the fact that most of the land surrounding Lake Saint-François is privately owned, many stakeholders have a role to play in wetland conservation, and the partnership is an essential element. This area is located in a priority area of the <http://www.ehiv.ca/where-we-work/quebec/> (EHJV) of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. In the province of Quebec, this partnership brings together the Government of Quebec, the Government of Canada, the Quebec Wildlife Foundation, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ducks Unlimited Canada and focuses on the protection and restoration of wetland habitats and associated habitats along the St. Lawrence River and the Ottawa River. For example, Ducks Unlimited Canada has established wetlands for waterfowl on both sides of the Beauharnois Canal and Nature Conservancy Canada has acquired peatlands (Small and Large Tea Fields) for conservation purposes in Saint-Anicet.

As for the role of the provincial and municipal governments, it is important to highlight the scope of the Province of Quebec's *Act respecting the conservation of wetlands and watercourses*. Some provisions of this law are intended to prevent loss of wetlands.