

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS



Ontario Conservation Centre

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February 19, 2016

Honourable Wayne Easter, MP
Chair, Standing Committee on Finance
131 Queen Street, 6th Floor
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Easter:

Subject: 2016 pre-budget consultation

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), the largest non-profit conservation-based organization in Canada, with 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters, and 725 member clubs across the province, we are pleased to provide comments during the pre-budget consultation.

Hunting, fishing and trapping are recognized as heritage activities in Canada, through both federal and provincial legislation. Collectively, fishing, hunting, trapping, and outfitting contribute \$15.2 billion annually to the national economy, make a significant contribution to the social and cultural fabric of this country, and are critically important to thousands of smaller communities from coast to coast to coast. In this context alone, the protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife populations across Canada must be a priority.

The OFAH and our affiliates across Canada have urged the federal government and its provincial counterparts to address a significant threat to wildlife, most notably cervids (deer, elk and moose). Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is the wildlife equivalent of mad cow disease (BSE) and there is irrefutable scientific evidence that CWD originated in cervid farms in the United States, and has now spread to wild populations in two provinces (Saskatchewan and Alberta) and many states bordering Canada. In jurisdictions where the disease has spread to the wildlife population from captive cervids, state and provincial governments have culled tens of thousands of animals in an attempt to stop the spread, with no success. The number of cervid farms across Canada has declined, as has their economic viability. The OFAH has repeatedly urged governments to eliminate financial subsidies to this industry and legislate cervid farms out of existence with compensation to the operators. A relatively small and short-term investment towards eliminating cervid farms now will protect our valuable wildlife resources to generate enormous return to the people of Canada for many generations to come. The return on investment will come in the form of many ecological, social, cultural, and economic benefits. Failing to address this significant threat jeopardizes many sustainable resource-based economies that rely on healthy deer, elk, and moose populations across Canada.

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The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) is a bi-national organization that administers the Sea Lamprey Control Program in the Great Lakes, with Fisheries and Oceans Canada acting as the Canadian agent. The GLFC's success in controlling Sea Lamprey has resulted in a reduction of these populations by up to 90 percent in most areas of the Great Lakes, which in turn, has allowed for a resurgence of the recreational, commercial and Aboriginal fisheries. Collectively, the Great Lakes fisheries are a one-of-a-kind resource that are worth \$7 billion. The current appropriation provided to the Sea Lamprey program by the federal government sits at \$8.1 million annually, which has remained static since 2005. At the very least, the commission needs at least \$12.8 million annually to continue the control of Sea Lamprey, foster science, facilitate cross-border management, and make additional investments in infrastructure like Sea Lamprey barriers and traps. The prime minister has committed to enhancing Great Lakes protection, as well as a commitment to freshwater science. We encourage the committee to recommend increased funding for the GLFC and Sea Lamprey control as a significant demonstration of this commitment.

Harmful invasive species continue to be one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in Canada. Species like Sea Lamprey, zebra mussels, Round Goby, and phragmites have a profoundly negative impact, and the potential introduction of new invasive species like Asian Carps pose significant threats to our ecosystems and economy, as well as our social and cultural well-being as Canadians. Environment and Climate Change Canada has estimated that invasive species can cost us billions of dollars each year. Zebra mussels alone cost the province of Ontario \$75 to \$91 million annually in economic losses associated with recreational and commercial fishing and boating, damages to infrastructure, and other costs. The federal government provided funding through the Alien Species Partnership Program until 2012. We encourage the committee to recommend that this funding program should be reinstated on a permanent basis with a focus on invasive species prevention. A modest investment in a program that works to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species in Canada will help to save on what will be required to address this increasing problem in the future.

The federal Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program (RFCPP) provides funding to community-based projects intended to enhance Canada's multi-billion dollar recreational fishery and the many benefits it provides to Canadians. While the program has successfully supported dozens of local and community-based projects since its inception, there are many more projects that would benefit from the continuation of this program in perpetuity. The OFAH asks the committee to recommend that the RFCPP receive continuing support. Terrestrial-based (wildlife) community conservation initiatives are also important to Canadians and would benefit from a similar dedicated funding source. Projects that seek to maintain and restore habitats for terrestrial wildlife (e.g. mammals, pollinators) should also be a priority, and we urge the committee to recommend the establishment of a program similar to the RFCPP for terrestrial species.

On June 19, 2014, the OFAH appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce to comment on Bill S-202, an Act to Amend the Payment of Card Networks Act (Credit Card Acceptance Fees), which did not pass at Second Reading.

While the bill dealt with a number of issues related to credit card fees, the OFAH commented in support of Section 10 (a) in the bill which, if passed, would have resulted in the elimination of credit card fees for charitable organizations. For thousands of charities across Canada, and in particular membership organizations like the OFAH, the elimination of these fees would be of considerable benefit. In any given calendar year we process over 55,000 thousand transactions that cost us transaction fees of \$100,000. As you can imagine, for a charitable non-profit, these fees are a considerable burden. The same would be true of any charitable membership organization. Like so many other charitable non-profits, the OFAH depends heavily on membership fees and fundraising to fund conservation programs, the elimination of credit card fees would result in considerable cost savings that could instead be directed to a number of fish and wildlife conservation programs and projects. We urge the committee to make a recommendation that the government re-visit the elimination of credit card fees for charitable non-profits as part of the 2016 pre-budget consultation process.

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In conclusion, we strongly believe that fishing, hunting, and trapping should be celebrated as an important part of our heritage, and invested in as a sustainable economic pillar for our future. These activities are deeply woven into the cultural fabric of Canada and its people. Fishing, hunting, and trapping are anchored in our history and continue to enrich the lives of millions of Canadians. We strongly encourage the committee to make recommendations so that the budget acknowledges that continued investment in our precious natural resources will pay huge dividends for Canada as a whole, and the benefits will be enjoyed well into the future.

We thank you for your time and attention in the above matters, and would be pleased to provide the committee with additional information, if requested.

Yours in Conservation,



Angelo Lombardo
Executive Director



Greg Farrant
Manager, Government Affairs & Policy

AL/GF/gh

cc: Members of the Standing Committee on Finance
Suzie Cadieux, Clerk
Mark Strahl, MP
Ed Fast, MP
Robert Sopuck, MP
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