



**NATURE** | **CONSERVATION**  
**CONSERVANCY** | **DE LA NATURE**  
**CANADA**

**SUBMISSION TO:**

**THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
2016-2017 PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION**

## **Executive Summary:**

Economic growth and environmental protection must go hand in hand. Our environment supports job creation and sustainable communities. Healthy terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems are the foundation for Canada's well-being.

Habitat loss, climate change, invasive species and other pressures increasingly threaten our environmental and financial future. We need to accelerate conservation action urgently to ensure that Canada's ecosystems can sustain and benefit both present and future generations.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada proposes the largest public-private investment ever in the conservation of our natural infrastructure. With a **\$250 million federal contribution** over five years, we will bring together provinces, industry and individual Canadians to create **\$750 million in conservation action.**

Canada is one of the few countries on the planet with sufficient remaining natural lands and waters to make a difference globally.

Now is Canada's time to step up and be recognized as the global leader in conservation.

## **Introduction:**

The Standing Committee on Finance has issued a challenge to Canadians to consider key budget policies that will help communities support residents and contribute to the nation's growth.

At the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), we can think of no more fundamental investment in our country's future prosperity than ensuring our natural infrastructure is conserved. We believe it is possible to realize the goal of sustained economic growth while conserving our natural heritage and maintaining healthy ecosystems. In fact, we believe you can't have one without the other. Our experience informs our view.

## **Conservation through Partnership:**

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of our natural areas and the species they sustain — plant, animal, and human.

We build partnerships: with communities, landowners, corporations, Indigenous peoples, and governments (local, provincial and federal), to secure some of the most ecologically sensitive lands in the country. We work with:

- Community leaders to help them safeguard the natural places their residents cherish.
- Ranchers and private landowners to help them achieve best practices and conservation on their lands.
- Industry to help companies achieve net benefits for nature.
- Indigenous peoples - active partnership projects include joint conservation initiatives, youth education and outreach, and co-management of lands to realize common goals. We also ensure Indigenous knowledge informs our stewardship.

- Provincial governments - In the past decade, every provincial government has financially supported and partnered with NCC to advance conservation. As a long-time partner with provincial governments, NCC has assisted in a wide range of activities, from transferring conservation lands to provincial parks, to recovery work for species at risk.

NCC has a strong track record as a trusted convenor of durable conservation solutions. Since 1999 we have successfully delivered quality conservation outcomes through various partnership programs with the Government of Canada. These initiatives evolved into the Natural Areas Conservation Program (NACP), a public-private partnership which to date has conserved more than 418,000 hectares (1 million acres). Along with our partners, we have raised over a half a billion dollars in matching contributions to secure conservation outcomes. These are not remote and inaccessible places. More than 80% of Canadians live within 100 kilometres of an NACP partnership project. NACP projects conserve habitat for more than a quarter of COSEWIC-listed species at risk such piping plover, lakeside daisy, and grizzly bear. More than half of the projects are within 25 kilometres of federally protected areas.

We are also able to work with industry to achieve lasting impact. Our recent work with Shell Canada resulted in the release of more than 8,600 square kilometers of offshore exploratory permits near Lancaster Sound, which NCC surrendered to the Government of Canada to support a future national marine protected area. This is the biggest contribution, to date, in support of the government's mandate to conserve 5% of marine and coastal areas by 2017 and 10% by 2020, as per the Convention on Biological Diversity (Aichi Biodiversity Targets). We have worked for many years to facilitate similar transfers in the pursuit of large-scale conservation.

Our collaborative conservation model works and delivers lasting results. Together, **over 55 years**, NCC and its partners have conserved more than 1.1 million hectares (2.8 million acres), coast to coast to coast. That's an area twice the size of Prince Edward Island. Over nearly six decades we have gained a deep understanding of Canada. Because of the breadth of experience and public trust in our work, NCC has been rated the top environmental charity in the country for six years in a row by *MoneySense Magazine*.

### **Nature: A Foundation for Economic Growth**

Economic growth and environmental protection must go hand in hand. We cannot grow and prosper without ensuring the viability and sustainability of our natural infrastructure. Natural capital is one of our competitive advantages and signals to the world that the environment plays a critical role in our economic development. The stewardship of our rich and productive ecosystems has direct benefits. Our environment supports job creation, helps to attract talent, and assists Canadian businesses to compete globally.

Nature provides essential goods and services that support the health and prosperity of our communities and enables Canadians to participate in the economy.

- Nature reduces grey infrastructure needs and helps clean our air and water;
- Nature helps communities and species mitigate adverse impacts of climate change;
- Nature supports our high standard of living and makes Canada an attractive country in which to live and invest;

- Nature supports the growing travel and tourism sectors (bigger as a percentage of GDP, than mining, agriculture or forestry).

Healthy terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems are the foundation for Canada’s well-being, today and tomorrow. However, habitat loss, climate change, invasive species and other pressures increasingly threaten our environmental and financial future. We need to step up conservation action urgently to ensure that Canada’s ecosystems can sustain and benefit both present and future generations.

### **Nature: Canada’s Gift to the World**

With 20% of the world’s fresh water supply, 25% of its northern forests, and 25% of its wetlands, Canada is one of the few countries on the planet that has sufficient remaining natural lands and waters to make a difference globally. Conservation here has an impact far beyond our borders. NCC works to conserve trans-border watersheds, such as the Flathead River Valley. Our conserved lands, support cross-border species such as the semipalmated sandpiper and monarch butterfly.

NCC was encouraged by the recent announcement made by Prime Minister Trudeau and the Presidents of the United States and Mexico to, “Take national actions to mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity across diverse sectors” and to “...bring together stakeholders to develop strategies for conservation investment.”

As a signatory to the Convention on Biodiversity (Aichi Biodiversity Targets), Canada has committed to protecting 10% of our marine and coastal areas and 17% of our terrestrial and freshwater habitat by the end of this decade. Only through partnership can we hope to achieve these goals. Only by working together — government and civil society — can we ensure Canada exceeds its international obligations and becomes recognized as **the world leader in conservation.**

Canada needs nature, and nature needs us all to redouble our conservation efforts – now.

### **Proposal for an Expanded and Enhanced Partnership with the Government of Canada**

To achieve the goal of being the world leader in conservation, we envision the largest public-private investment ever in Canadian conservation. The Nature Conservancy of Canada’s five-year plan will complete more than 500 priority conservation projects, including 12 signature landscape initiatives and an accessible network of Nature Destinations for the general public. We will conserve habitat, connect more people to nature and inspire others to join us.

An expanded and enhanced public-private partnership is essential. Canada already has an efficient and effective conservation delivery partnership in place with the Nature Conservancy of Canada through the Natural Areas Conservation Program. The challenge now is to grow this partnership to accelerate the pace of conservation so Canada can be recognized as the world leader in protecting its natural infrastructure.

***The Nature Conservancy of Canada proposes an expanded and enhanced conservation partnership with the Government of Canada supported by a federal contribution of \$250 million over five years. Through this expanded partnership, NCC will engage with Canadians to leverage and match the federal government’s contribution to achieve the largest public-private investment ever for nature and a cumulative investment of \$750 million in conservation action.***

A further federal investment of \$250 million in the NACP partnership will yield more than **500,000 hectares** (1.2 million acres) of newly conserved habitat and support the establishment of **millions of more hectares** of federal and provincial protected areas. It will build upon existing initiatives to create the largest cumulative public-private investment in conservation in Canadian history.

An expanded and enhanced public-private partnership program with the Nature Conservancy of Canada will conserve important natural habitats right across Canada, connect more Canadians to nature, and inspire communities to care for our natural infrastructure, by:

- Continuing to protect our natural infrastructure and a full suite of ecological goods and services, including clean water, carbon storage and sequestration, flood protection, pollination services, and drought mitigation.
- Implementing critical stewardship actions to protect and restore natural habitat, including increased connectivity within the greater protected area ecosystem.
- Conserving habitat for at least a third of Canada's terrestrial and freshwater species at risk.
- Influencing and supporting conservation on the working landscape.
- Enhancing our conservation planning, an area where NCC is already a Canadian leader. We have developed tools to ensure we are targeting the highest priority places. Highly-detailed assessments of all of Canada's southern ecoregions are complete and publically available. An expanded partnership will allow completion of similar assessments for northern geographies, providing all interested groups with critical data to support informed, evidence-based decisions on development and conservation. Canada cannot be mission-successful on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets without the ecologically representative landscapes of the south AND the vast expanses of the north. Conservation planning underpins an integrated system.
- Building more partnerships with Indigenous peoples right across Canada to realize conservation objectives for the lands and waters of ecological importance in their own territories.
- Supporting work with industry to facilitate the relinquishment of mineral rights, to remove roadblocks and accelerate the establishment of federally and provincially protected areas, especially national marine protected areas. Collaboration on this scale (such as our recent work with Shell Canada in Lancaster Sound), is urgently required if Canada is to achieve the fast-approaching Aichi Targets for marine and terrestrial conservation.
- Engaging more Canadians in conservation, on their own lands, and elsewhere. To date, the NACP has supported the work of 38 local land trusts. We will continue to grow these opportunities, building upon standards, practices, and processes to help land trusts ensure they are able to deliver quality conservation in the future.

### **Conclusion:**

Canada already enjoys a positive reputation as a nation that benefits from collaboration between government and conservation practitioners. Internationally, Canada is recognized for progressive leadership and ability to marry environmental policy, tax incentives and on the ground delivery to achieve impact. The Natural Areas Conservation partnership and the Ecological Gifts Program are just two examples of successful Canadian programs studied by other countries. Many nations have environmental and conservation policies in place but without fiscal incentives for private landowners and citizens, the programs aren't able to reach their potential. The power of engaging government and civil society to leverage conservation action nation-wide cannot be overstated.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada envisions the biggest public-private investment ever in Canadian conservation. An investment in nature is also an investment in our economy, in job creation in the health and prosperity of our communities.

At the Nature Conservancy of Canada, we are ready to do our part. Together we can build on Canada's reputation and commitment to nature. Working in partnership, Canada can be number one in the world for what we conserve today, and what we choose to pass on to future generations, tomorrow.