



## **Submission**

**To the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance**

**January, 2012**

**Presented by the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers'  
Network (CEGN)**

The Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network (CEGN) is a federally registered charitable organization dedicated to increasing the scope and effectiveness of environmental philanthropy in Canada. Incorporated in 2001, CEGN currently has 60 members, representing a range of private, community, and corporate foundations, as well as government grant programs and major individual donors. Eight of our current members are based in the United States.

CEGN works to improve environmental philanthropy by sharing knowledge, facilitating collaboration, strengthening skills, and giving a public voice to the shared aspirations of our members. We do this through a number of program activities, including research briefs; webinars; workshops; and an annual conference. CEGN would like to take this opportunity to express its strong support for the Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving, as recommended by Imagine Canada in its pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

The stretch tax credit will strengthen the contribution the charitable sector makes to the health and vitality of our country and its citizens. This contribution is well documented, both in terms of specific issues addressed by organizations and individuals, as well as in terms of the health of our democracy as a whole. As one observer has noted, "If we believe that our patterns and levels of participation are important to the kind of nation that we are, it is important to understand and nurture all the roots that will sustain, and perhaps even increase such caring and activism in the future."

Philanthropy in support of the protection of Canada's environment is an important subset of philanthropic support for the charitable and non-profit sector overall. Member surveys by Imagine Canada, Philanthropic Foundations of Canada, and Community Foundations of Canada indicate that environmental grantmaking ranges between 6 % and 15% of the funding for those organizations surveyed. A study by CEGN of 93 grantmakers showed a total of \$110,565,000 being directed to support charitable environmental activities in Canada in 2007. The average grant size was \$50,371 and the three major issues receiving funding were biodiversity and species preservation; coastal and marine ecosystems; and terrestrial ecosystems and land use.

Canadians share a strong affinity for and a keen desire to ensure the stewardship of our natural environment. As noted in the federal government's 2012 backgrounder for discussions on the development of a National Conservation Plan, "Canada's vast and iconic landscapes, seascapes, and wild species are part of our national identity, and Canadians derive enormous benefit from our natural heritage. Healthy and diverse ecosystems sustain key sectors of our economy (e.g., agriculture, forestry, fishing, tourism) and underpin our long-term prosperity. In addition to its environmental and economic values, our natural environment also contributes to the health and well-being of Canadians – physically, mentally, culturally, and spiritually."

Philanthropic foundations have worked closely with environmental NGOs, often in tandem with corporations and governments, to support a number of environmental achievements, big and small. These include: protecting wetlands, one of our most important and fragile ecosystems; providing research and leadership to reduce acid rain in Canada and the US; volunteer-led restoration and enhancement of fish-bearing streams and rivers; strengthening economic networks that support local farming and food production; helping create knowledge and a workforce that can help build a Canadian green economy; and supporting the ability of Canadian communities to transition to a low-carbon future.

Specific milestones that have benefited from the work and commitment of funders and NGOs include:

- An agreement between Canada and the United States to reduce sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, effectively curtailing acid rain.
- The establishment of the *North American Waterfowl Management Plan* to protect wetlands in Canada.
- The establishment of over 1000 new parks, wilderness areas and nature reserves between 1990 and 2000, which represented a doubling of the amount of protected area across the country.
- The *Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement*, which is an unprecedented collaboration between 21 major Canadian forest products companies and nine leading environmental organizations designed to accomplish objectives which include accelerating the completion of a protected spaces network and enhancing sustainable use of the boreal forest located outside of protected areas.
- The establishment and adoption of the Forest Stewardship Council certification system, which has led to healthier forests and a forest economy rooted in ecological principles.
- The declaration of Bisphenol A (BPA) as a toxic substance by the Government of Canada and the establishment of by-laws in a number of Canadian municipalities banning the use of cosmetic pesticides.

Environmental NGOs continue to play a key role in researching and stimulating debate on a range of public policy issues. This constructive role is carried out in a number of ways, including: researching what other jurisdictions are doing; providing economic and technical analysis of policy options in Canada; evaluating proposed policies and initiatives against established environmental, economic and social benchmarks; providing public education; and ensuring that environmental laws are implemented.

Canada has made great strides in environmental stewardship, but there is still work to be done. Concerted efforts on the part of environmental organizations, along with those of concerned corporations, governments, and citizens, will be essential to the tasks ahead. The proposed Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving would be an important tool to help Canadians work together toward our environmental goals.

*This Brief has been submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance on January 17, 2012 by the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network (CEGN). Information about the work of CEGN and its membership can be found at [www.cegn.org](http://www.cegn.org)*