



## **PROJECT LEARNING TREE CANADA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2019 FEDERAL BUDGET AUGUST 2018**

### **ABOUT PROJECT LEARNING TREE CANADA**

Project Learning Tree (PLT) Canada is a Canadian non-profit organization that fosters community interest in the benefits of environmental education and responsible management of Canada's natural resources. We are committed to using the outdoors to engage students in learning about the world around them—in urban, suburban, rural, and Indigenous communities, and using trees and forests as windows on the world to inspire action. This is achieved by building knowledge and successful practices for youth leaders, that help to grow future forest and conservation leaders.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

PLT Canada is pleased to have the opportunity to present recommendations for the 2019 pre-budget consultations ahead of the next federal budget. This document relates to the suggested topic of Economic Growth: Ensuring Canada's competitiveness by relating to two themes – Investing in Green Jobs for Youth and Building Future Leaders Through High-Quality Environmental Education to Include Indigenous Perspectives.

The federal budget 2017 included investments to expand employment opportunities for young Canadians in green jobs until March 2020. We encourage continued investments in green jobs to support further growth and opportunities for youth to build skills and explore career opportunities in the natural resource sector. We encourage the federal government to build off these investments by supporting the development of high-quality environmental education programs and resources that include a greater understanding of Indigenous connections to the land. Robust environmental education programs would build greater understanding in youth leaders about the opportunities that are available for youth in the green sector. Building this knowledge has long-lasting impacts, helping to fuel a future workforce in the natural resource sector. We also recommend funding to incorporate vital Indigenous

knowledge into youth education to build future citizens that have a stronger foundation in sustainable resource development.

“There can be no greater contribution or more essential element to long-term environmental strategies leading to sustainable development that respects the environment... than the education of future generations in matters relating to the environment,” (UNESCO, 1988).

PLT Canada believes that a career in the natural resource sector is one that provides opportunities, growth, diversity and fulfillment. These opportunities should be available to all youth – whether in rural, urban or Indigenous communities. Building a strong foundation for a future workforce will require long-term investment in the shaping of educators and youth leaders to expose more youth to the possibilities of a career in this sector. More importantly, training leaders to understand the complexities and realities of resource development including environmental, economic and community relationships is critical to its success. Intertwined in all of this is the understanding of Indigenous connections to the land and their participation in the resource economy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The government continues to provide funding in the amount of \$15 million annually for the Green Jobs in Green Spaces program as part of the Government of Canada’s Youth Employment Strategy. Funding will enable continued opportunities for youth to explore careers in the green sectors to build a future workforce in natural resource development.
2. That the government provide funding for Environmental Education programs that focus on Canada’s natural resources sectors and its transition to a low-carbon economy. Funding would support teacher training and education resource development, and experiential opportunities for youth to understand the complexities of the resource industries. As part of creating a robust approach to environmental education, it will be critical to include Indigenous perspectives and relationships with the land, including their participation in the natural resource economy. Funding will build resources and experiences to educate youth and youth leaders, in addition to providing increased opportunities for Indigenous youth to explore careers in the natural resource sector. This will also be the building block for continued success in the Green Jobs in Green Spaces program.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: CONTINUED FUNDING FOR THE GREEN JOBS IN GREEN SPACES PROGRAM**

As Canada transitions to a low-carbon future, envisioned by the Pan-Canadian Framework, we will need to ensure that worker support, skills upgrading, and education and training are in place to assist the transition. Promoting green job opportunities to youth now will ensure that we are well positioned in the future to have a prosperous low-carbon economy. Canada’s natural resource workforce is aging and lacking diversity, and Canadians are increasingly urban. Youth are more isolated from the natural resources that Canada’s economy relies on and programs are needed to inspire youth to consider the natural resource sector as a viable career option.

In Federal Budget 2017, the government announced additional investments to expand employment opportunities for young Canadians. The expanded Youth Employment Strategy (YES) has been helping more than 33,000 vulnerable youth develop skills needed to find work or continue their education. This expanded program included the creation of 15,000 new green jobs for youth for the fiscal years of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

Project Learning Tree Canada appreciates the opportunity to support government to achieve their goal by successfully placing more than 1,700 youth in green jobs across Canada. The feedback has been inspiring from youth and employers alike.

*“One thing that I value the most, being an intern, is the opportunity to work with individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced in their field of work. Gaining experience is crucial in this world.” – Courtney Jackson, Green Jobs intern in Thunder Bay, ON.*



*Courtney Jackson, Green Jobs student with Resolute Forest Products.*

We encourage renewed investment in the program to build on this success and further develop tomorrow's natural resource workforce.

## RECOMMENDATION 2: FUNDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

We are committed to using the outdoors to engage students in learning about the world around them—in urban, suburban, rural, and Indigenous communities, and using trees and forests as windows on the world to inspire action. Environmental education fosters community interest in the benefits of responsible management of Canada’s natural resources. In Canada, there is currently a fractured landscape related to environmental education nationally. PLT Canada will be developing a network of organizations and resources that will encourage youth K-12 and post-secondary to learn about the relationship of the natural environment to human health and the economy and will focus on building skills in youth as they build their career paths.

To ensure that youth are considering green careers requires an investment in the development of their knowledge and understanding of these opportunities. This can best be achieved by integrating green career exploration within their schooling through teacher training, resources, and mentorship opportunities. Also, environmental education will inform and support youth’s decisions to pursue careers in a wide number of areas including architecture, bio-technology, clean technology, engineering, biology, and natural resource management, and more.

Benefits of environmental education (PLT 2017) for K-12 and post-secondary are well understood, and funding is needed to expand resources and reach to ensure these benefits, such as:

- **Supporting STEM:** Environmental education offers an engaging platform for gaining and applying knowledge and skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
- **Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> Century Needs:** Environmental education emphasizes skills essential for succeeding in tomorrow’s world, such as questioning, investigating, defining problems, analyzing, interpreting, reasoning, developing conclusions, and solving problems.

Holistic environmental education also requires including and understanding Indigenous perspectives and their connections with the land that will build educated and informed contributors to society. The most pressing global environmental issues affect Indigenous peoples to a higher degree than other communities and they are unequally impacted. By connecting environmental education leaders to Indigenous leaders and making them synonymous with each other, we can better understand our connections to the land and foster passion in youth, the leaders of tomorrow, to appreciate our environment and be inspired to take action to better the world around them.

This work can only be done by working with Indigenous communities, elders and leaders to ensure that the right knowledge and approach to integration is achieved. This will require a collaborative network of partners across the country to bring together best practices and approaches, in addition to creating collaboration for successful delivery. The training of educators and youth helps to meet Action 62 of the Truth and Reconciliation Report: Education for Reconciliation, providing the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms, and utilizing Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.

*“Indigenous Knowledge and Western Knowledge can be taught together. Aboriginal and Western philosophies, beliefs, and spirituality do not need to be taught in opposition, or in isolation. It is only when we can teach our students to understand themselves and the world around them, that we can create true empathy, understanding, and hope for the future of our planet.” – Deborah McCallum, Education consultant*

Project Learning Tree Canada will be developing environmental education tools that incorporate Indigenous traditional knowledge into environmental science. Funding to work alongside Indigenous communities in this process will be crucial to ensure that resources take into consideration all relevant knowledge.

A future workforce in natural resources will require considerable investment today to build citizens that are educated and informed on the complexities of relationships and knowledge that are needed to make sustainable choices in natural resource management. This will create a future of successful resource industries in Canada, that are supported by the diversity of careers that make Canada's resource sector world-leading.

## **CONCLUSION**

PLT Canada would welcome the opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Finance to discuss the importance of environmental education, opportunities for youth to pursue careers in the green jobs and natural resource sector, and the connections between Indigenous knowledge and environmental education.