



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

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

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PETITION No.: **421-02202**

BY: **Ms. MAY (SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS)**

DATE: **MARCH 29, 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**

The Government of Canada provides national leadership when it comes to protecting the environment, and the health of Canadians. From climate change to air quality, to the conservation of our water and land, we are working to ensure clean growth for Canadians.

### **Enacting a Canadian Strategy that Supports Actors to Take Environmental Actions**

The Government of Canada recognizes that comprehensive education and training programs are necessary to build support for environmental policies and encourage collective action on the part of all Canadians. Canada's constitution allocates the responsibility for education to provincial and territorial jurisdiction, which is why Canada does not have a national education policy or curriculum. However, all levels of government and numerous non-governmental organizations have undertaken a range of activities to broaden public awareness of climate change and other environmental considerations.

Coordination among provinces and territories occurs through the provincial and territorial Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. The Council has included education for sustainable development as one of the key activity areas in Learn Canada 2020, its framework to enhance Canada's education systems, learning opportunities, and overall education outcomes. Throughout Canada, climate change is taught across a range of subjects and grades, starting as

early as grade 4. Environmental programs also figure quite prominently in most Canadian universities with several providing a range of courses of study in climate science and research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. An increasing number of institutions emphasize the social science aspect of environmental studies and many of these programs afford students the opportunity to study climate change.

At the federal level, specialized training programs cover a wide range of activities from improving fleet and building operations, to best practices for businesses (e.g., corporate social reporting, carbon neutral options), to adaptation planning for municipalities. The Government of Canada offers training for Canadian consumers and businesses on the skills they need to improve energy use through NRCan's Office of Energy Efficiency initiatives. Since 1997, more than 30,000 representatives of industrial, commercial, and institutional organizations from across Canada have enrolled in Dollars to \$ense workshops offered by the Office of Energy Efficiency. These workshops provide energy-saving tips so that industry and commercial entities can lower operating and production costs, improve economic competitiveness, reduce GHGs, increase operational efficiency, and create a better work environment. In the transportation sector, the Office of Energy Efficiency training initiatives include FleetSmart, Fuel Management 101, SmartDriver, and Auto\$mart, all of which provide access to training curricula that promotes energy efficiency in transportation operations.

Environment and Climate Change Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service has a variety of community action programs that support actions that result in healthy, sustainable, and flourishing human and ecological communities. As part of Canada's national strategy for the protection of species at risk, the Government of Canada established the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) for Species at Risk. The overall goals of the HSP are to "contribute to the recovery of endangered, threatened, and other species at risk, and to prevent other species from becoming a conservation concern, by engaging Canadians from all walks of life in conservation actions to benefit wildlife." The HSP allocates approximately \$12.2 million a year to projects that both conserve and protect species at risk and their habitats and to those that prevent other species from becoming a conservation concern.

The Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR), established in 2004-2005, supports the development of Indigenous capacity to participate actively in the implementation of the Species at Risk Act (SARA). The protection of species at risk in Canada depends upon a meaningful collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and organizations. The Act recognizes the important role that Aboriginal Peoples play in wildlife conservation and the need to consider Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) in the assessment of which species may be at risk, as well as in the development and implementation of protection and recovery measures. Additionally, AFSAR supports projects that will proactively prevent species, other than species at risk, from becoming a conservation concern. The AFSAR program allocates approximately \$3 million a year to projects on Indigenous lands and waters.

The National Wetland Conservation Fund (NWCF) supports on-the-ground activities to restore and enhance wetlands in Canada. The objectives of the fund are to:

- Restore degraded or lost wetlands on working and settled landscapes to achieve a net gain in wetland habitat area;
- Enhance the ecological functions of existing degraded wetlands;
- Scientifically assess and monitor wetland functions and ecological goods and services in order to further the above objectives to restore and/or enhance wetlands; and
- Encourage the stewardship of Canada's wetlands by industry and the stewardship and enjoyment of wetlands by the Canadian public.

The 'Connecting Canadians to Nature initiative', operated through the Canadian Wildlife Service, supports outreach to communities and youth on a selected number of near-urban National Wildlife Areas (<http://www.ec.gc.ca/ap-pa/default.asp?lang=En&n=E1B7D252-1>). This is done by way of nature-based activities (such as geo-caching) and organizations that deliver conservation-themed programming, supported through contribution funding. Under the initiative, capital spending is also directed to improve site access by youth and communities.

Events and interactive platforms are also used to engage Canadians, particularly youth, on the topic of climate change. On November 23, 2016, Environment and Climate Change Canada held the first National Youth Summit on Climate

Change in Ottawa, Ontario. This event engaged approximately 100 youth (17-25 years-old) from the National Capital Region and reached well over 500,000 youth across Canada through livestreaming. Youth gained knowledge and insight on climate change impacts from several keynote speakers and worked in small groups with experts to discuss these issues and develop actions they can do in their home, school, and community. Youth online participated in a live discussion with the Environment and Climate Change Minister and special guests. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change will be hosting a second Youth Summit on Clean Growth and Climate Change in 2018. The objective of the Youth Summit is to engage Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in a clean growth and climate change dialogue by raising awareness, educating, creating a groundswell and challenging them to take action in their communities. On August 31, 2017, Environment and Climate Change Canada released Climate Kids, an interactive website for children and teens (8 to 15 years-old) to engage on the topic of climate change. The site generates national awareness of climate change directly with youth and indirectly with parents, grandparents and caregivers. The website provides information on the science of climate change and encourages youth to be part of the solution by making changes in their home, school, and community to reduce their carbon footprint and create a more sustainable and clean future.

Non-governmental organizations also play a central role in providing information to Canadians, developing public education and awareness campaigns, and encouraging citizen action on climate change. A wide variety of Canadian non-governmental organizations have environmental programs ranging across a spectrum of research and analysis, education and awareness, public advocacy, and online and social media campaigns. The goals of many of these organizations are to inform Canadians about climate change and potential impacts, advance the public policy debate, and encourage collective action on climate change. For example, the Smart Prosperity Institute is a national research network and policy think tank delivering research and work with public and private partners to advance practical policies and market solutions for a stronger, cleaner economy. A key initiative of the Institute, the Smart Prosperity Initiative, was launched in 2016 by Canadian leaders from business, think tanks, labour, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and NGO communities to advocate for Canada's transition to a green economy. A second example is the Pembina Institute, a national non-profit think tank focused on developing innovative sustainable energy solutions through research, education, consulting and advocacy. The Institute conducts research and provides policy and technical analysis to various levels of government, businesses and other organizations.

Furthermore, Canada has several organizations, including environmental youth groups, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies, specifically focused on environmental education. These organizations specialize in providing professional development and training, educational resources, and expertise to support educators both within the formal school system and in other educational facilities. A number of portals exist to help teachers easily access diverse resources and to allow teachers to align teaching activities with required education curriculum outcomes.

### **Fresh Air, Clean Drinking Water and Healthy Food as Human Rights**

The Government of Canada recognizes that environmental stewardship is essential for the well-being and prosperity of Canadians, and believes that ensuring that Canadians enjoy a healthy environment is a shared responsibility for all Canadians, including federal, provincial and local governments, the private sector, civil society and Indigenous peoples.

Existing federal laws, including the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA), the *Fisheries Act*, and the *Species at Risk Act*, establish a robust framework for environmental protection. Some of these laws also already establish procedural rights with respect to environmental protection and include environmental principles. For example, CEPA establishes a number of opportunities for public participation (e.g., a right for the public to comment on certain proposed actions, orders and regulations under the Act) and requires transparency in decision-making. CEPA also refers to the following principles: sustainable development, precautionary principle, pollution prevention, polluter pays, inter-generational equity, and co-operative federalism. However, the implications of codifying a human right related to the environment go well beyond these procedural rights, and would be novel in federal law.

The Government of Canada demonstrates the importance placed on having access to fresh air, clean drinking water and healthy food for Canadians through a multitude of initiatives and commitments. For example, the Government

recognizes that poor air quality can have significant impact on human health, the environment and the economy and has committed to provide leadership to improve air quality. To this effect, Budget 2017 provided \$201 million over 4 years to address air pollution in Canada, including support for the implementation of the Air Quality Management System (AQMS). The AQMS is a comprehensive approach for reducing air pollution in Canada and is the product of an unprecedented collaboration by the federal, provincial and territorial governments and stakeholders.

The Government of Canada also recognizes that freshwater is a precious resource that deserves protection and careful stewardship and is investing significant resources to support infrastructure projects to protect Canada's freshwater. These investments include a Clean Water and Wastewater Fund to improve water and wastewater infrastructure, and support to access clean and safe drinking water on reserve.

Finally, Budget 2018 proposes to provide, from existing departmental resources, up to \$59.8 million over 13 years, starting in 2018–19, for programming to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals include access to clean water and sanitation for all, climate action, the elimination of hunger and the promotion of good health and well-being.

The Government of Canada recognizes the need for action at all levels, and is working together with its partners to encourage the promotion of environmental and sustainability. From climate change to air quality, to the conservation of water and land, the Government of Canada is working to ensure clean growth for Canadians.