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LICENSED HUNTING AND TRAPPING IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

**Harold Albrecht
Chair**

JUNE 2015

41st PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION

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**Harold Albrecht
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has the honour to present its

TENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) the Committee has studied Licensed Hunting and Trapping in Canada and has agreed to report the following:

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LICENSED HUNTING AND TRAPPING IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

On February 19, 2015 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (the Committee) passed a motion agreeing to undertake a study of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada. The Committee further agreed that the study would examine:

- the cultural significance of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada;
- the economic contribution of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada;
- the participation in licensed hunting and trapping throughout Canada;
- the contributions of hunters and trappers to wildlife management and conservation;
- the role of scientific research in wildlife management; and
- wildlife enhancement programs and policies across Canada.¹

For thousands of years, Aboriginal peoples on the land that was to become Canada “depended on the land and ... lived within the cycles of natural life.”² Understanding and respecting the animals hunted was fundamental for survival.³

This dependence on the land continued into the era of European colonization and formed the basis of early Canadian history. The trapping industry and the fur trade are said to have “opened up the doors to the north.”⁴ Along the shores of the St. Lawrence, hunting, trapping and fishing were essential survival activities that allowed for colonization of the lands. As expressed by a representative of the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, “we owe a great deal to the wildlife on the land and the resources in the water. ... Canada's economic development was first made possible by the fur trade and the relationships established as a result with the indigenous people in the country. That trade really marked the birth of Canada.”⁵

1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development [ENVI], [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, February 19, 2015.

2 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Brian Craik, Director, Federal Relations, Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)).

3 [Ibid.](#)

4 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Harold Grinde, President, Association of Mackenzie Mountain Outfitters).

5 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Pierre Latraverse, President, Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs).

The Committee has undertaken various studies that have included the input of hunters and trappers, but in its 26-year history, it has never devoted a study to this fundamental part of Canadian heritage. With this in mind, the Committee undertook this study during the winter and spring of 2015 hearing from witnesses from across the country who shared their knowledge and views on licensed hunting and trapping. The Committee is pleased to present its findings.

THE STATE OF HUNTING AND TRAPPING IN CANADA

A. Number of Participants

When Committee members asked witnesses about participation rates in licensed hunting and trapping in their regions, several people referred to the 2012 Canadian Nature Survey, which was prepared by federal, provincial and territorial governments of Canada.⁶ In that publication, it was reported that during the 12-month period preceding the survey, approximately 2.1 million Canadians representing 8% of the population aged 18 and over participated for at least one day in non-commercial hunting or trapping. On a per capita basis, this participation rate is higher than that of the United States. According to the testimony, hunting and trapping are popular activities in every region of the country.

For comparison, 5.5 million Canadian adults representing 21% of the population participated in fishing during the same time period, and nearly 23 million people (89% of Canadian adults) participated in at least one nature-related activity during the period. On average, Canadian adults who participated in hunting or trapping spent approximately 24 days per year doing so within 20 km of their homes, and approximately 20 days per year participating further afield.

More people participate in hunting in Canada than in trapping.⁷ According to a witness, there are about 60,000 active trappers in Canada, which includes 25,000 Aboriginal people.⁸

B. Organizations

Of the 2.1 million Canadians who participate in hunting or trapping, the Committee heard that almost all belong to a conservation organization,⁹ such as a provincial or territorial wildlife federation or fish and game association. Over the course of the study, the Committee heard from representatives of almost all of these organizations from across Canada.

6 Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments of Canada, [2012 Canadian Nature Survey: Awareness, participation and expenditures in nature-based recreation, conservation, and subsistence activities](#).

7 [Ibid.](#), pp. 30–31. The number of Canadian adults who reported participating in trapping represented approximately 0.5% of the population, which was below the threshold for statistical reliability.

8 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (Robert McLean, Executive Director, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environmental Stewardship Branch, Department of the Environment).

9 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

Provincial and territorial wildlife federations are not-for-profit, volunteer organizations that promote hunting, trapping and angling and the conservation of wildlife and habitat. Generally they provide hunter education and firearm safety courses in addition to advocating for government policies and legislation supportive of hunting and trapping. Many also provide programs to introduce new people — women, youth, urbanites, new Canadians and families — to outdoor activities.¹⁰

Representatives from the provincial and territorial wildlife federations told the Committee about some of the many conservation programs and projects in which they are involved. Significantly, many of them have established foundations to acquire and manage habitat for the sustainable use of wildlife. Habitat conserved through these foundations as well as other conservation programs and projects led by hunters and trappers are discussed in more detail later in this report.

C. Demographics

“Hunters come from all walks of life. They are judges, lawyers, business people, dentists, doctors, mechanics, even politicians.”¹¹ Many more men than women engage in hunting or trapping.¹² The split between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people participating is more even, with approximately 50% of Canadian trappers being Aboriginal.¹³ However, in some regions, such as the Northwest Territories, virtually all the trappers are Aboriginal.¹⁴ Hunting is also popular among both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, although no statistics were provided in this regard.¹⁵

The Committee heard that hunters and trappers are predominantly middle-aged and older men,¹⁶ although the number of women who participate is increasing.¹⁷ One witness told the Committee that, in his province, “68% of hunters are 45 or older.”¹⁸ This aging of the participant population is consistent with an overall trend of gradual

10 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Gordon Zealand, Executive Director, Yukon Fish and Game Association).

11 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Greg Farrant, Manager, Government Affairs and Policy, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters).

12 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Darrell Crabbe, Executive Director, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation).

13 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Robert Cahill, Senior Vice President, North American Fur Auctions).

14 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Evan Walz, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories).

15 [Ibid.](#)

16 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Charles LeBlanc, President, New Brunswick Wildlife Federation).

17 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

18 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Latraverse).

decline in participation in hunting and trapping in Canada.¹⁹ For example, the number of waterfowl hunters dropped from over 500,000 in the 1980s to about 200,000 today.²⁰

The decline in participation in hunting is mirrored in trapping. The Committee was told that the number of people trapping in the Northwest Territories, for instance, had declined from about 2,500 in the 1980s²¹ and stabilized around 600 to 740 over the last eight years.²²

Several witness suggested that one of the causes of the decline in participation in hunting and trapping in Canada is an increasing urbanization of society.²³ More people are living in urban centres, and more young people are spending their time on electronic devices rather than playing outdoors and engaging with nature. Several witnesses described what they feel is the consequence: youth becoming disconnected from nature and the land.²⁴ The Committee heard that this is true of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth alike.²⁵

Despite this long decline in participation in hunting and trapping, numerous witnesses reported an upturn in recent years.²⁶ The Committee heard that hunting and trapping education courses — some filled to capacity²⁷ — are qualifying thousands of new people to hunt or trap.²⁸ One witness described a “massive movement of urban people coming back to hunting.”²⁹

“Among people trying hunting or trapping for the first time are increasing numbers of women and young people.”³⁰ One witness described youth and women as “the fastest growing demographic in outdoor sports.”³¹ This statement was supported by statistics provided by several other witnesses.³² They attributed the trend to factors such as a desire

19 [Ibid.](#) (Gregory Weeks, Secretary, National Board of Directors, Ducks Unlimited Canada).

20 [Ibid.](#) (Cameron Mack, Executive Director, Wildlife Habitat Canada).

21 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

22 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Walz).

23 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks). Also see, for example, ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Darin Brecht, Director, Finance & E-Commerce, Canadian Division, Cabela's Canada).

24 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (Julie Gelfand, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development).

25 [Ibid.](#) (Grinde).

26 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks); ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant); ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc); and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Rob Olson, Managing Director, Manitoba Wildlife Federation).

27 [Ibid.](#) (LeBlanc).

28 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

29 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

30 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant). Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Duncan Crawford, President, Prince Edward Island Wildlife Federation).

31 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Wayne Lowry, President, Alberta Fish and Game Association).

32 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

to reconnect with the outdoors³³ and the influence of the popular media, including books and movies such as *The Hunger Games*.³⁴

D. Opportunities for New People to Try Hunting and Trapping

Wildlife federations are responding to the historical demographic trends in hunting and trapping and helping to fuel the noted recent trend in women and young people participating in hunting or trapping. A number of witnesses described recruitment and training programs targeting women or youth.³⁵ Recruitment into hunting is important because, as discussed later in the report, hunters and trappers are leaders in conservation. Therefore, recruiting people into hunting and trapping is recruiting them into conservation. In addition, at least one witness felt that, with respect to youth, getting “kids off the electronics and off the couch and outdoors” might solve a lot of other societal problems as well.³⁶

A program targeted at women known as “Becoming an Outdoorswoman” is popular in a number of provinces. A witness from Manitoba testified that the program in that province sells out immediately every year to urban women who want to get reconnected to the outdoors.³⁷ He testified that this program has a very high conversion rate, and that among women who come to the weekend program, about 90% continue to participate in the outdoors.³⁸ He testified that once recruited, these same people “have never said no to us when we've come back to them and asked them to help us with this conservation thing. They always give.”³⁹

From the Northwest Territories, a Mackenzie Mountain outfitter described for the Committee a new northern youth leadership program for teenage girls that his camp hosted last year and plans to continue to support.⁴⁰ A witness from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation described a program supported by his organization that takes kids out hunting waterfowl, deer and turkeys. These hunts, which have spread across the province, focus on mentorship and safety training.⁴¹ He described the challenge in funding that his organization is facing in order to continue to engage with young people and their parents. He testified that “if we can recruit them into [hunting], they’re going to be there to do the conservation work and to drive the conservation plan work.”⁴²

33 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

34 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

35 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry).

36 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Brecht).

37 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

38 [Ibid.](#)

39 [Ibid.](#)

40 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

41 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

42 [Ibid.](#)

Representatives from the Northwest Territories described a number of efforts that the Government has put in place to attract youth into hunting and trapping. The “Take a Kid Trapping” program is aimed at children from grade one to middle school. Kids are taken on trips of one to three days with Aboriginal people or other harvesters to learn survival skills and to trap for muskrats or beaver.⁴³ Other programs are aimed at high school kids.⁴⁴ In addition, the Northwest Territories has lowered the minimum age required to get a licence and changed the rules so that a licensed hunter or trapper can take someone under 18 with them.⁴⁵

E. Threats and Obstacles to Hunting or Trapping

Increasing Canadians’ opportunities to hunt or trap, if they would like to do so, is important because people who are actively engaged in outdoor activities are more likely also to engage in conservation activities. The Committee heard that if people are “not out on the landscape, they’re not managing the resource.”⁴⁶ In addition, as expressed by one witness, “it’s also economics, because these are the very people who are paying for fish and wildlife programs across the country. Without those people buying licences and without those people buying products and whatnot, the economy suffers, and the fish and wildlife suffer.”⁴⁷

Accordingly, Committee members asked witnesses what they perceive to be the threats and obstacles to hunting and trapping that might make carrying out these activities “just not worth the trouble.”⁴⁸ Various witnesses responded that the potential or actual impediments to carrying out these activities include unintended consequences of government regulations or policies, a lack of a right to hunt or trap for non-Aboriginal people, lack of habitat available for hunting or trapping and availability of other economic opportunities.

1. Consequences of Government Regulations or Policies

Chief among legislation that witnesses raised as having unintended consequences on the hunting and trapping community was the long-gun registry, which Parliament enacted in 1995. A witness testified that “when that came in, it just turned sour. A lot of men and women just gave up the sport. They got rid of their guns and we lost them forever. We also lost the billions of dollars that those folks may have contributed over the past 20 years.”⁴⁹ However, a witness reported that since the abolition of the gun

43 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Jamie Chambers, Head, Field Support Unit, Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories).

44 [Ibid.](#)

45 [Ibid.](#) (Lynda Yonge, Director, Wildlife Division, Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories).

46 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

47 [Ibid.](#) Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

48 [Ibid.](#) (Farrant).

49 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Tony Rodgers, Executive Director, Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters). Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

registry, there has been a “significant increase in membership, particularly in those clubs that do have gun ranges.”⁵⁰

A recent policy that was unpopular with the fur sector — and, according to one witness, also with the agricultural and hunting sector⁵¹ — was the RCMP decision to significantly reduce the number of muskrat hats worn by police officers in favour of toques. Though the decision itself would only affect muskrat, a witness told the Committee that “the larger community involved in the use and management of both domestic and wild animals in this country saw the symbols and signals here to be very negative and very concerning.”⁵²

A witness raised a third example of government requirements with unintended consequences for the hunting or trapping community: restrictions on transporting wildlife across borders.⁵³ He described how a CITES⁵⁴ permit is needed to take a wolf hide back to the United States, but there is only one officer who can issue a CITES permit in all of the Northwest Territories. The witness stated that unless that officer is in the office on the day an American hunter goes home, then getting a wolf hide into the United States is a three-month process that costs about \$500.⁵⁵ He testified that “it gets a little more difficult every year. It’s almost like somebody says if we make it hard enough, they’ll just quit coming.”⁵⁶

Another type of decision that can reduce opportunities for people to hunt and trap occurs through the creation of new parks and protected areas.⁵⁷ A witness questioned why non-Aboriginal people are not allowed to hunt in remote, northern national parks such as Nahanni.⁵⁸ He pointed out that wildlife populations in these areas are “strong and healthy and vibrant,” and that there is no security issue in parks that receive only a handful of visitors a year.⁵⁹

While a clear role of governments is “to ensure we provide proper structure, harvest reporting, and limits on harvests, so that there will be abundant wildlife for our children and their children for generations to come,”⁶⁰ supporting hunters and trappers was identified as

50 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry).

51 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Gregory Thompson, Advisor, Fur Institute of Canada).

52 [Ibid.](#)

53 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

54 CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. CITES is implemented in Canada through the [Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act](#), S.C. 1992, c. 52.

55 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

56 [Ibid.](#)

57 [Ibid.](#)

58 [Ibid.](#)

59 [Ibid.](#)

60 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Brecht).

a means to meet this end. A witness described the federal government's "clear commitment to supporting hunters, trappers, and conservationists" as being "critical."⁶¹ Another witness urged "the committee to think in all of the policies they see how they would impact the hunting, trapping, and angling community because these types of initiatives can have unintended and negative consequences on a sector that is investing heavily in environmental conservation."⁶²

2. Lack of a Right to Hunt and Trap for Non-Aboriginal People

Several witnesses suggested that the animal rights movement poses a concern to the hunting and trapping community.⁶³ They felt that animal rights legislation or policies are not based on sound science and should not impose arbitrary bans or changes to hunting or trapping practices.⁶⁴ The European Union ban on the trade of seal products was held up as an example of legislation based on "a stigmatization of sealing by the anti-use industries."⁶⁵

Canada has responded to threats to the fur industry by implementing the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards and establishing the Fur Institute of Canada in order to retain access to international markets for Canadian furs.⁶⁶ A representative of the Fur Institute testified that the organization "remains a vital player in sustaining the licensed and regulated trapping of wild fur and sealing in Canada."⁶⁷ He called for a continuation of core funding from the Government of Canada in order to continue trap research and testing to implement the international agreement and maintain access to international markets.⁶⁸

Several witnesses remarked favourably on a recent private members bill, Bill C-655,⁶⁹ which would create a new criminal offence of intentionally interfering with lawful hunting, trapping, fishing or sport shooting.⁷⁰ However, witnesses stated that in most provinces such legislation already exists.⁷¹

61 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks).

62 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Jonathan Scarth, Senior Vice-President, Delta Waterfowl Foundation).

63 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Nancy Daigneault, Vice President, Americas, International Fur Federation).

64 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Daigneault).

65 [Ibid.](#) (Dion Dakins, Chair, Sealing Committee, Fur Institute of Canada).

66 [Ibid.](#) (Thompson).

67 [Ibid.](#)

68 [Ibid.](#)

69 Bill C-655, [An Act to amend the Criminal Code \(interference with hunting, trapping, fishing or sport shooting\)](#), 2nd Session, 41st Parliament.

70 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Thompson) and (Daigneault).

71 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (James Brennan, Director, Government Affairs, Ducks Unlimited Canada) and (Latraverse).

Other witnesses suggested that Parliament should go a step further and enshrine a generally applicable legal right to hunt, fish and trap.⁷² A witness suggested that doing so would eliminate the polarization between the anti-hunting and trapping activists and the sustainable use community and enable people to “work together for the betterment of wildlife and for the habitat.”⁷³

However, at least one witness raised a contrary perspective. He suggested that Canada does not need more protections for hunters and trappers, but rather it needs more resources to enforce existing regulations.⁷⁴ He described trap lines that are hundreds of kilometres long with few conservation officers to monitor trapping practices.⁷⁵

3. Habitat Loss

Several witnesses mentioned habitat loss as a primary cause of biodiversity loss,⁷⁶ which ultimately results in fewer opportunities for hunting and trapping. One witness described habitat loss as “the biggest assault that we’re having on wildlife and fish populations throughout North America.”⁷⁷

The causes of habitat loss are varied. The Committee heard that conservation of land for sustainable use of wildlife competes with the agricultural and industrial sectors, including the oil and gas industry. Several witnesses testified that conservation comes second to other needs because conservationists cannot raise enough money to compete with industry “on a dollars-and-cents basis for a site with an ecological or environmental benefit.”⁷⁸ It was suggested that land-use planning, informed by research, needs to be a priority.⁷⁹

The question of the extent to which climate change is affecting habitat and consequently the ability of people to hunt and trap was posed to witnesses throughout the study. One witness described how climate change, along with invasive species, poses one of the largest threats to biodiversity and needs to be “taken into account for all natural resource management strategies.”⁸⁰ Climate change was discussed in testimony as

72 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

73 [Ibid.](#) (Grinde).

74 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Michael Howie, Director of Digital Content and Special Projects, The Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals).

75 [Ibid.](#)

76 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (Gelfand) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Mark Boyce, Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, As an Individual).

77 [Ibid.](#) (Boyce).

78 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry) and (Crabbe).

79 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

80 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

having possible implications for the management of the birds of the boreal forest,⁸¹ snow geese⁸² and caribou.⁸³

The decline in caribou herds, and in particular of the barren ground caribou of the Northwest Territories, was a topic of particular interest in the study. A representative from the Northwest Territories told the Committee that the Bathurst herd, which once comprised between 450,00 to 480,000 animals, is now estimated to have fewer than 15,000 animals.⁸⁴ All hunting of this herd, including hunting by Aboriginal rights holders, has been stopped,⁸⁵ causing a significant consequential economic loss in the region.⁸⁶

The Committee heard that serious declines in caribou populations are not unprecedented; the caribou populations go through a natural cycle.⁸⁷ However, a representative of the Northwest Territories government testified that a number of caribou herds in the circumpolar world “are in the same difficult situation,” which, “given that it’s happening in other areas in North America, it certainly suggests there’s something larger at play here.”⁸⁸

Northerners and scientists are seeing changes in the land.⁸⁹ Several witnesses told the Committee that green-up is happening earlier in the North.⁹⁰ According to a biologist who specializes in wildlife research, vegetation has already matured and gone past its most nutritious stage when the caribou arrive at their calving grounds, so the nutritional status of many of the northern migratory herds has been affected as a consequence of climate change.⁹¹ The Committee heard that bug harassment of caribou, possibly altered by climate change, may also be a factor.⁹²

While there is no consensus of the extent to which climate change may be causing the decline in caribou populations, witnesses testified that “climate change has an impact on all habitats.”⁹³ However one witness suggested to the Committee that man-made decisions — such as decisions to clear-cut a forest or to dam a river — that are not based

81 [Ibid.](#) (Brennan).

82 [Ibid.](#)

83 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

84 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Walz).

85 [Ibid.](#) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

86 [Ibid.](#) (Grinde).

87 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Yonge).

88 [Ibid.](#) (Walz).

89 [Ibid.](#) (Yonge) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

90 [Ibid.](#) (Yonge) and [Ibid.](#) (Boyce).

91 [Ibid.](#) (Boyce).

92 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Yonge).

93 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (Gelfand).

on science are of equal concern as climate change.⁹⁴ He stated that such decisions “tend to have very immediate repercussions on our natural resources.”⁹⁵

4. Availability of Other Economic Opportunities

A final threat to hunting or trapping that was discussed during the study relates to trapping in the North. A representative of the Government of the Northwest Territories suggested that participation in trapping is influenced by economic factors, such as fur prices, the cost of trapping equipment and fuel supplies.⁹⁶ The witness also explained that trapping is now rarely seen as a full-time occupation in the Northwest Territories; it is more “often a secondary or a tertiary source of income for households.”⁹⁷ Accordingly, the availability of other economic opportunities and wage employment influence the number of people who choose to trap.⁹⁸

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUNTING AND TRAPPING

A. Culture, Quality of Life and Family

Canada’s tradition of hunting, trapping and fishing has been passed down through generations and is still “a way of life for many Canadians.”⁹⁹ As expressed by one witness, these activities continue “to make an important contribution to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of Canada today for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike.”¹⁰⁰

Reflecting the deep attachment to this way of life, many witnesses were emotional when describing why they continue to hunt or trap. According to one witness, some people find describing the attachment to hunting “difficult to put into words.”¹⁰¹ Another witness told the Committee: “I hunt, therefore I am.”¹⁰²

The Committee was told that hunting engages people “through a unique, lifelong relationship with the natural world.”¹⁰³ A witness likened explaining why he hunts to explaining the benefits of religion.¹⁰⁴ He described how hunting, fishing or trapping becomes engrained in your life and those of your friends and family to the point that it

94 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

95 [Ibid.](#)

96 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Walz).

97 [Ibid.](#)

98 [Ibid.](#)

99 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

100 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

101 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

102 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers).

103 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks).

104 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

becomes “the common denominator that we all seem to rally around.”¹⁰⁵ He described how he enjoys his non-work hours spent with his family and circle of friends either pursuing those activities in the outdoors or volunteering, doing fisheries and wildlife work or fundraising. “It becomes who you are and what you are,”¹⁰⁶ he concluded. Another witness representing an outdoors equipment retailer was more succinct: “we sell fun.”¹⁰⁷ He added that people “look to our products as a way to live their life.”¹⁰⁸

Some witnesses felt hunting or trapping are important for family connection. Hunting, trapping and fishing were described as “valued heritage activities, with traditions passed down from generation to generation.”¹⁰⁹ Such activities have helped to foster other traditions, such as family gatherings at hunt camps where people gather to “celebrate the great outdoors [and] ... share food, music and friendship.”¹¹⁰ Another witness described how living in the bush together for a week helps people reconnect and sometimes helps families heal.¹¹¹ “It’s deep and it’s important,”¹¹² he told the Committee.

In addition to the cultural and lifestyle reasons for hunting or trapping, some people continue the traditions to provide an important food source for their families.¹¹³ Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal hunters and trappers alike “provide a variety of wild food for the family table.”¹¹⁴ A representative of the Government of the Northwest Territories testified that species such as caribou, moose, muskox, bison, polar bear, grizzly bear, black bear and dall sheep are “essential to the health of many people, especially those living in smaller more remote communities.”¹¹⁵ While most Canadians don’t rely on hunting or trapping for food today, one aspect driving more people to hunt for food is a desire “for clean, fresh, unspoiled food.”¹¹⁶ As one witness stated, “harvesting wildlife is about as close to the source as you can get without contaminants, without processing from industry.”¹¹⁷

Hunting and trapping have also had an influence on other aspects of Canadian culture. For instance, the Committee heard that the lifestyle and culture of

105 [Ibid.](#)

106 [Ibid.](#)

107 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (John Tramburg, Vice President, Cabela's Canada & Outdoor Services, Canadian Division, Cabela's Canada).

108 [Ibid.](#)

109 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc).

110 [Ibid.](#)

111 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

112 [Ibid.](#)

113 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers) and (Ward Samson, Member, Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation).

114 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers).

115 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Walz).

116 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

117 [Ibid.](#) Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers).

hunting has, at least indirectly, “had a major influence on the development and promotion of wildlife art in North America.”¹¹⁸

Despite the depth of feeling and cultural significance of hunting and trapping to those Canadians who participate in these activities, it bears noting that not all Canadians share the same view.

I would think we all somewhat work on the premise that 10% of the population completely support hunting, 10% are adamantly opposed to it, and the 80% in the middle are the group that we all try to attain support from. If we have very definitive research on hunting and the benefits of hunting that we can provide to that 80%, they'll recognize the great values that those activities provide for society as a whole.¹¹⁹

The Committee heard from one witness who raised concerns with trapping in particular on the grounds that, in his experience, it is at times carried out in a manner that is cruel to animals, it is a danger to non-targeted species, including domestic pets and species at risk, and it is a public hazard.¹²⁰ As such, the witness supported an end to trapping in the same way as he would also like to see “the end of poverty and war.”¹²¹

An important aspect of the cultural significance of hunting and trapping, for the purposes of this study, is the link between these activities and wildlife conservation.¹²² A witness described to the Committee how, before he takes a youth group out duck hunting, he tells them that hunting ducks and eating the meat makes them “responsible for [the ducks] forever. Forever they're entrusted to your care, so you have to make sure you always put back more than you take.”¹²³ The Committee explored this connection between hunting and trapping culture on one hand and wildlife conservation and management on the other hand in some depth. The findings are summarized later in this report.

B. Wildlife Management

The testimony suggests that “hunters and trappers play an important direct role in wildlife management.”¹²⁴ Specifically, they provide information for wildlife management; control population levels; control human-wildlife conflict; carry out conservation work on the ground; and provide a voice in support of conservation and sustainable management.

118 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

119 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

120 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Howie).

121 [Ibid.](#)

122 See ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks).

123 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

124 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean). Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Scarth); ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant); and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Latraverse).

1. Providing Information for Wildlife Management

Managing the sustainable use of wildlife requires reliable information about trends in their population levels and health. As hunters or trappers are in the field observing wildlife and their habitat they are “the ears and eyes of the land.”¹²⁵ One witness noted that trappers can be “the first to sound the alarm if the environmental balance is upset by pollution, habitat destruction, or diseases such as rabies and distemper.”¹²⁶

Gathering information on wildlife populations and health directly can be expensive. For example, the Committee heard that Alberta spends \$600,000 a year monitoring moose populations by helicopter.¹²⁷ However, since hunters and trappers are out on the land interacting with nature, information about species they have seen or harvested may be collected from them, almost for free. The Committee heard of various programs under which hunters and trappers provide information for wildlife management.

For example, waterfowl hunters provide important information on the species they have hunted to the Canadian Wildlife Service, the government branch responsible for migratory birds. Under random sampling, hunters also provide duck wings or goose tail feathers that they have harvested and which allow the government to identify the species hunted as well as its sex and age. A government representative described this information as being “fundamental to sustainably managing the harvest.”¹²⁸

Similarly, the Committee heard that in New Brunswick, trappers turn in the carcasses to provincial biologists. The animals are then “sexed, aged, weighed, and the reproduction success determined” in order to provide “good baseline data to the provincial biologists who manage these populations.”¹²⁹ A witness stated that “when the fur-bearers are harvested, we know exactly how many animals, so it would be very indicative of the population and health of these herds.”¹³⁰

Hunters harvesting whitetail deer or moose in Nova Scotia are asked to turn in the jawbones of animals to the provincial Department of Natural Resources. Trappers are asked to turn in the carcasses of certain animals they trap. The government is then able to get an idea about the condition and age of the animals harvested. Hunters and trappers also volunteer their time to do counts for the department, and they report animals that have been hit by cars.¹³¹

In Quebec, the Cree Trappers' Association has a number of programs that provide information for wildlife management. As summarized by a witness:

125 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Daigneault). Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

126 [Ibid.](#) (Daigneault).

127 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

128 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

129 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc).

130 [Ibid.](#)

131 [Ibid.](#) (Rodgers).

They maintain a voluntary harvest registry system for fur-bearing animals and the harvest of big game. They coordinate and participate in various studies through the collection of information. There is a moose jaw study, which indicates something about the health of the moose population. There is a harvest data for migratory birds, various traditional knowledge studies, and climate change studies, which are tracked by the Cree Trappers' Association. If you go to their website you'll see there's a portal that shows the observations that have been made by Cree trappers in climate change.¹³²

In Alberta, the provincial government asks hunters to participate in a voluntary program to provide information about the number of moose they see every day. The Committee heard from an Alberta professor and hunter who initiated the development of a mobile application to facilitate the collection of this information. The application allows hunters to easily input how many bulls, cows, calves and unidentified animals they saw each day while hunting in the field, as well as the number of hours they spent hunting each day. The witness explained that the “number of moose seen per day is very highly correlated with the number of moose in the population.”¹³³

The Committee heard from an outfitter who works in the Mackenzie Mountains of the Northwest Territories. He testified that the territorial government does not have a large budget for studies, and therefore that it relies on the outfitters “as their eyes and ears on the ground.”¹³⁴ He said that “most of the data that the [Northwest Territories] gathers as far as wildlife population numbers and trends are concerned comes from reports that the outfitters and all of our clients submit.”¹³⁵ The witness went on to suggest that it would be beneficial if wildlife managers — many of whom grow up in urban centres and are hired to manage wildlife based on their academic credentials — were to use more traditional and local knowledge in making management decisions.¹³⁶

2. Controlling Population Levels

As described by a witness, due to development and other human interference with the natural world, we will never again have a natural ecosystem in which humans do not need to manage population levels.¹³⁷ Hunters and trappers play an essential role in this management, in reversing the decline of some species, reducing overabundant populations of other species and maintaining the health of wildlife.

An example of hunters helping to reverse the decline of a species was provided by a government representative. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Atlantic population of Canada geese experienced a sharp drop. Hunters raised concerns with wildlife managers, who then closed the hunting season for these birds until 1999. Hunters respected the closed season, which resulted in the population recovering and

132 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Craik).

133 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

134 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

135 [Ibid.](#)

136 [Ibid.](#)

137 [Ibid.](#)

stabilizing to the point where, in 2002, all hunting restrictions on this species were lifted in Canada.¹³⁸

With regard to reducing overabundant populations, hunting was described by several witnesses as “scientifically ... one of the best tools in controlling animal populations.”¹³⁹ Examples the Committee heard of overabundant species that hunters are helping to control include snow geese, which cause damage to farms, resident Canada geese, which take over city parks and golf courses, and continental white-tailed deer, which are involved in thousands of motor vehicle collisions each year.¹⁴⁰ From Alberta, an example was raised of a wolf population control program, which has resulted in an increase in the population of caribou in that province.¹⁴¹

Controlling wildlife population levels not only helps maintain populations for the sustainable use community, it also helps the health of the populations themselves. One witness described hunting as being “absolutely essential for keeping game populations healthy.”¹⁴²

Not all witnesses were supportive of controlling population levels through hunting and trapping, however. Regarding predator control, one witness testified about studies that suggest “that coyotes reproduce at a higher rate when they’re persecuted” and that “wolves increase depredation on livestock when they are disrupted by trapping.”¹⁴³

Nevertheless, the importance of hunters and trappers to wildlife management is recognized by governments. A witness stated that the Ontario government “has statements in its policies that say hunting is the most valuable wildlife management tool they have available to them because it’s managed.”¹⁴⁴ However, some witnesses felt that the general population under-appreciates the important role of hunters and trappers in wildlife management. One witness suggested that, in connection with Canada’s 150th anniversary, there should “be a requirement for further education and more science and evaluation about the role that trappers, hunters, and fishers play in maintaining an ecosystem balance.”¹⁴⁵

3. Controlling Human-Wildlife Conflict

Trappers provide a valuable service to society by controlling problem wildlife such as beavers, which cause millions of dollars of flood damage each year to infrastructure

138 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

139 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Latraverse). Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

140 [Ibid.](#) (Latraverse).

141 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

142 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Latraverse).

143 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Howie).

144 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

145 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Dakins).

and crops.¹⁴⁶ In urban areas — such as Toronto, which was been described as the ‘raccoon nation’ of North America — trappers help to keep animals in check “so that the lights stay on.”¹⁴⁷

A witness told the Committee that “in just about every jurisdiction that has banned trapping, that decision has morphed into nuisance wildlife control work.”¹⁴⁸ Further, he suggested that problems arise when homeowners start trapping nuisance animals rather than leaving this work up to trained trappers.¹⁴⁹

From New Brunswick, an example was raised of trappers helping to control zoonotic disease. A witness told the Committee that, in 2000, that province had a problem with rabies in coyotes, foxes, raccoons and skunks.¹⁵⁰ In response, trappers “live-trapped, vaccinated, and ear-tagged more than 500 animals” to successfully reduce the amount of rabies in a particular area.¹⁵¹

A final example of trappers helping to manage wildlife was raised in the context of reintroducing species to their original habitat. The Committee heard that, in Alberta, trappers “were key to helping reintroduce wolves to Idaho. Back in 1996, 66 wolves were live-trapped in Alberta and released in Idaho. By the year 2005, the wolf population in that state had grown to 565, and last year the population was at a healthy 770. This is another excellent example of how trappers support the environment.”¹⁵²

4. Carrying Out Conservation Work on the Ground

The Committee heard that, in addition to participating in wildlife management through engaging in hunting and trapping, hunters and trappers also tend to carry out direct conservation projects on the ground. A few of these projects are described below. Conservation projects relating to habitat that have been initiated by hunters are described later in this report.

The Committee heard from a representative of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), which has been engaged in the restoration of species in Ontario that were “teetering on the brink of extinction,” such as elk, wild turkey, and Atlantic salmon.¹⁵³ OFAH also runs an invasive species program in partnership with the provincial and federal governments “to prevent or control the spread of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.”¹⁵⁴ OFAH operates a stream steward program to restore creeks and

146 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

147 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Jim Gibb, Chair, Communications Committee, Fur Institute of Canada).

148 [Ibid.](#)

149 [Ibid.](#)

150 [Ibid.](#) (Daigneault).

151 [Ibid.](#)

152 [Ibid.](#)

153 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

154 [Ibid.](#)

wetlands and a classroom hatchery program to teach kids about habitat and conservation.¹⁵⁵

A representative of the Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters told the Committee about a specific project that his organization carried out, building ramps up the sides of a particular bog where moose were getting trapped.¹⁵⁶ The B.C. Wildlife Federation provides a wetlands education program “to restore, enhance, and conserve wetland sites across the province.”¹⁵⁷ The New Brunswick Wildlife Federation also carries out environmental and educational projects. Many of the affiliated clubs run classes for hunters, including firearm safety classes, and they provide programs to introduce young people to the outdoors and “make them understand how important the environment is.”¹⁵⁸

From Alberta, the Committee heard of an antelope corridor enhancement project being carried out by members of the Alberta Fish and Game Association. Along antelope migration routes in that province, association members provide materials and labour to adjust or replace fences making them easier for antelope to pass under.¹⁵⁹ To date, the association has replaced over 900 kilometres of fencing, and the program continues every year.¹⁶⁰ The association also operates an auction and raffle every year raising funds that are invested in wildlife research and habitat development.¹⁶¹

A representative from the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation spoke more broadly when he told the Committee that wildlife federations raise millions of dollars each year to protect and enhance habitat, and to invest in research, outdoors education and responsible conservation management.¹⁶² The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation also finances and provides thousands of volunteer hours towards invasive species programs and species at risk initiatives.¹⁶³

5. Providing a Voice in Support of Conservation and Sustainable Management

Throughout this study, the Committee heard from witnesses who emphasized that the sustainable use community is, as one witness put it: “a strong voice for conservation” and “strong advocates of sustainable management of the resource.”¹⁶⁴

155 [Ibid.](#)

156 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers).

157 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

158 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc).

159 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry).

160 [Ibid.](#)

161 [Ibid.](#)

162 [Ibid.](#) (Crabbe).

163 [Ibid.](#)

164 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

The Committee heard from many long-standing conservation organizations that were founded by hunters, trappers and anglers and continue to rely heavily on support from this community to carry out their missions. For example, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Ducks Unlimited Canada and provincial and territorial wildlife federations and fish and game associations were all founded by hunters, trappers and anglers.

A representative from Delta Waterfowl Foundation testified that “it is ... hunting and angling groups that are in the forefront of efforts to help build durable environmental policies and programs that integrate sustainable use, and to work within the resource and agricultural communities to accommodate and sustain wildlife and fish populations.”¹⁶⁵ Similarly, a witness from Ducks Unlimited Canada stated that “licensed hunters and trappers have played a vital role in the growth and development of our organization and in driving the vital conservation successes we have had on the landscape.”¹⁶⁶

A practical example of how the voice of hunters and trappers can influence decisions was raised with respect to a fish and game association advocating for conservation in Alberta. A witness described how, this spring, an oil and gas development lease option came up for a 25,000-square mile area. The Alberta Fish and Game Association banded together with a few other conservation-minded organizations to successfully get the lease option cancelled.¹⁶⁷

C. Economic Contribution

The contribution of hunting and trapping to the Canadian economy is significant, especially “to communities which may have limited employment opportunities, particularly Aboriginal and remote communities.”¹⁶⁸ Yet, at least one witness told the Committee that there is not “enough recognition of the value of what our outdoor resource contributes to the Canadian economy.”¹⁶⁹

In terms of direct spending, numerous witnesses cited figures from the 2012 Nature Survey, which was prepared by federal, provincial and territorial governments of Canada.¹⁷⁰ According to that survey, Canadians spent approximately \$1.8 billion on hunting and trapping in the 12 months prior to answering the survey.¹⁷¹ This figure represented almost 5% of the total \$40.4 billion that Canadians spent engaging in nature-related activities and contributing to nature conservation efforts.¹⁷² Broken down, this

165 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Scarth).

166 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks).

167 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry).

168 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

169 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Zealand).

170 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (Gelfand) and (McLean).

171 Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments of Canada, [2012 Canadian Nature Survey: Awareness, participation and expenditures in nature-based recreation, conservation, and subsistence activities](#), pp. 32–33.

172 A witness pointed out that only 2% of the 5%, or 0.1% of approximately \$40 billion generated by recreational outdoor use is attributable to trapping. See ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Howie).

\$1.8 billion was comprised of expenditures for transportation (36%), accommodation (8%), food (15%), and equipment, fees and supplies (41%).¹⁷³ Further, the 2012 Nature Survey reported that, on average, hunters and trappers each had spent \$996 in the previous 12 months on these activities.¹⁷⁴

Of the \$1.8 billion figure, waterfowl hunting, which is federally regulated, contributes \$327 million each year to the Canadian economy.¹⁷⁵ A representative from Wildlife Habitat Canada explained why the economic contribution from waterfowl hunters cannot easily be replaced by spending on other nature-related activities: “the average waterfowl hunter spends nearly seven times the daily expenditure of a birder.”¹⁷⁶

Regarding the economic contribution of trapping, the Committee heard that there are substantial fluctuations in the annual income generated by the wild fur trade. Over the past five years, revenue generated by the sale of wild furs on a national basis has fluctuated from a low of \$13.5 million in 2010 to a high of \$39 million in 2013.¹⁷⁷ In addition to the sale of furs, the purchase of trapping equipment also generates revenue. The Committee was told that, thanks to the federal government’s investment in trap research, the tools of trapping that are used in Canada are developed and manufactured by small businesses in Canada.¹⁷⁸

The total contribution that licensed hunting and trapping make to the Canadian economy is much larger than the \$1.8 billion figure spent directly on hunting and trapping. According to a representative of Environment Canada, “hunting, fishing, and trapping activities contribute approximately \$14 billion to the Canadian economy each year.”¹⁷⁹ Building on that figure, another witness stated that guides and outfitters generate another \$1 billion.¹⁸⁰ He told the Committee that

Hunting and trapping generate economic prosperity. The purchase of goods and services associated with these activities impacts on many sectors of the economy...

For many communities across this country, this economic contribution keeps them afloat even in hard times. Recreational hunting and fishing tourism alone injects over \$1 billion annually into the economy, provides job opportunities, and supports hundreds of small and medium-sized businesses from coast to coast to coast.¹⁸¹

173 Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments of Canada, [2012 Canadian Nature Survey: Awareness, participation and expenditures in nature-based recreation, conservation, and subsistence activities](#), p. 37.

174 [Ibid.](#), p. 33.

175 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

176 [Ibid.](#)

177 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Cahill).

178 [Ibid.](#) (Gibb).

179 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

180 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

181 [Ibid.](#)

Hunting and fishing are large draws for the tourism industry. A witness drew the Committee's attention to data provided in a report prepared by the Canadian Tourism Commission in 2012, entitled "Sport Fishing and Game Hunting in Canada."¹⁸² The data show that "hunting, trapping, and recreational fishing also have an enormous upside in terms of tourism-related opportunities."¹⁸³ The authors of the report emphasized that Americans in particular enjoy hunting and fishing in Canada. Specifically, "over the period of 2004 to 2005, 9.2 million adult Americans went hunting while on an out-of-town trip of one or more nights while 32.1 million went fishing."¹⁸⁴ As expressed by the witness:

Clearly, Americans know what we already do, which is that this country is home to some of the best outdoor opportunities available anywhere. This in turn opens the door for significant revenue generation and employment opportunities for a wide range of businesses and communities across the country that cater to the hunting, trapping, and fishing communities.¹⁸⁵

Some witnesses testified as to the economic contribution of hunting and trapping in specific provinces and territories. For example, the Committee heard that in Quebec, "hunting represents an overall economic impact of \$540 million."¹⁸⁶ This figure includes \$205 million spent on moose hunting followed by \$138 million spent on small game hunting.¹⁸⁷ In New Brunswick, hunting and trapping licence sales alone were valued at \$3.7 million last year.¹⁸⁸

In Saskatchewan, hunting, angling and trapping are estimated to generate \$600 million annually in economic activity and provide over 1,000 full-time equivalent positions, mostly in rural locations.¹⁸⁹ An additional 400 to 500 positions are provided by non-governmental organizations, such as Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation and Ducks Unlimited, and through the federal government.¹⁹⁰

With regards to the territories, the Committee heard that the bison hunt alone is worth millions of dollars to the Yukon economy.¹⁹¹ The Committee heard that, in the Northwest Territories, residents spend approximately \$19 million on hunting, fishing and trapping activities each year.¹⁹² Non-residents may also hunt in that territory under a

182 Canadian Tourism Commission, [*Sport Fishing and Game Hunting in Canada — An Assessment on the Potential International Tourism Opportunity*](#), October 2012.

183 ENVI, [*Evidence*](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

184 Canadian Tourism Commission, [*Sport Fishing and Game Hunting in Canada — An Assessment on the Potential International Tourism Opportunity*](#), October 2012, p. 3.

185 ENVI, [*Evidence*](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

186 ENVI, [*Evidence*](#), March 26, 2015 (Latraverse).

187 [*ibid.*](#)

188 ENVI, [*Evidence*](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc).

189 ENVI, [*Evidence*](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

190 [*ibid.*](#)

191 [*ibid.*](#) (Zealand).

192 ENVI, [*Evidence*](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

licence and, for hunting big game, with a licensed guide and outfitter. The outfitting hunting industry is estimated to contribute about \$2.5 million each year to the territory's economy.¹⁹³ The outfitting industry also employs between 150 and 170 people as guides, cooks, helpers, etc.¹⁹⁴ Overall, hunting and fishing in the Northwest Territories were described as “part of the economic engine that drives the local economies.”¹⁹⁵

The impact of hunting and fishing extends through various aspects of the economy, some of which are not measurable in terms of dollar value. In Nova Scotia, for example, a program called Hunters Helping the Hungry donated more than 2,000 kilos of protein to the community food bank.¹⁹⁶

Hunters and trappers also indirectly support Canada's economy through their conservation efforts, which are discussed in greater detail later in this report. Conserving habitat produces benefits and services — such as water quality regulation, flood control, opportunities for outdoor recreation and increased tourism — which are enjoyed by society at large. A representative of Ducks Unlimited Canada cited a 2013 study that found that Ducks Unlimited's conservation and habitat restoration activities, largely supported by hunters, generates GDP benefits of \$77.1 million per year. The same study found that the more than 2.5 million hectares of wetlands and natural areas secured and managed by Ducks Unlimited Canada generates an estimated \$208.5 million in economic activity through Canada's recreation and tourism sector alone.¹⁹⁷

HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS AS STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A. Why Hunters and Trappers are Conservationists

Witnesses described hunters, trappers and anglers as among North America's first conservationists, after Aboriginal people.¹⁹⁸ Today, hunters, trappers and anglers continue to be leaders in wildlife management and conservation. As expressed by one witness, “we support conservation more than any other interest group, and most conservation programs in North America would not exist without the efforts and investments of hunters and anglers.”¹⁹⁹

These statements are supported by statistics analyzed in several recent studies, which were referenced at Committee meetings.²⁰⁰ The 2012 Nature Survey quantified the correlation between nature conservation activities and hunting and trapping:

193 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Walz).

194 [Ibid.](#)

195 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

196 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers).

197 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks).

198 [Ibid.](#) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

199 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

200 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

Canadians who participated in nature conservation activities were more likely than those who did not to participate in hunting/trapping ($r = .21$) and in fishing ($r = .22$). In terms of proportions, 16% of Canadians who participated in nature conservation also participated in hunting/trapping activities, whereas only 5% of Canadians who did not participate in nature conservation participated in hunting/trapping activities.²⁰¹

These findings are consistent with those of a recent study published by Cornell University researchers in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. The Cornell study found that

participation in any form of wildlife recreation was associated with significant increases in the relative likelihood of carrying out habitat enhancement. Hunters were 2.9 times more likely, birders were 3.5 times more likely, and hunter–birdwatchers were 4.7 times more likely than non-recreationists to carry out these activities.²⁰²

The activities referred to in this article included “donating to support local conservation efforts, enhancing wildlife habitat on public lands, advocating for wildlife recreation, and participating in local environmental groups.”²⁰³ Witnesses agreed that the study’s findings reflect their experiences. One witness stated that, as far as he knew, “almost every hunter belongs to some kind of conservation organization and puts money on the ground to try to improve habitat.”²⁰⁴

The Cornell study’s authors theorized why people who engage in wildlife recreation, such as hunting and trapping, contribute disproportionately to conservation. They suggested that engaging in these activities “fosters connections with local landscapes that builds and/or reinforces attachment to place, ultimately leading to place-protecting actions.”²⁰⁵

This theory was supported by several witnesses. One described the connection succinctly: “You know, when we use it, we own it. We seem to be more passionate if we do participate.”²⁰⁶ Another stated:

People only care about things they know, and if we want to make sure we maintain our wilderness areas and maintain viable ecosystems, people have to know what they are. Hunting and trapping and fishing are a way of getting people out there so they understand what’s out there and how important it is. Then maybe people will care about it and make changes. From a national perspective, that’s very important.²⁰⁷

201 Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments of Canada, [2012 Canadian Nature Survey: Awareness, participation and expenditures in nature-based recreation, conservation, and subsistence activities](#), p. 55.

202 Caren Cooper et al., “Are Wildlife Recreationists Conservationists? Linking Hunting, Birdwatching, and Pro-Environmental Behavior,” *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, Vol. 79, Issue 3, April 2015, p. 454.

203 Ibid., p. 446.

204 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

205 Caren Cooper et al., “Are Wildlife Recreationists Conservationists? Linking Hunting, Birdwatching, and Pro-Environmental Behavior,” *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, Vol. 79, Issue 3, April 2015, p. 454.

206 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc).

207 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Yonge).

Another witness suggested that the act of taking the life of an animal creates a spiritual connection with the animal. In his view, “that connection is the reason that hunters have always taken the lead, and probably always will, when it comes to conservation.”²⁰⁸ He also described an “invaluable” tie between people and the land on which they harvest wildlife.²⁰⁹

Because being in the outdoors fosters conservationism, a witness called for more government funding for groups that work to connect Canadians — including new Canadians and youth — with nature.²¹⁰ He described this as a “cheap” way to create environmentalists, which, in his view, is at least as important as investing in habitat.²¹¹

B. Habitat Conservation

Habitat loss has previously been discussed in this report as a threat to hunting and trapping. The importance of habitat conservation to support hunting and trapping was acknowledged in testimony.²¹² It was also clear from the testimony that hunters and trappers contribute significantly to habitat conservation across Canada.

1. Approaches for Improving Habitat Conservation in Canada

The Committee previously studied terrestrial habitat conservation in Canada, and it tabled a report in February of 2014.²¹³ In that report, the Committee noted that “habitat degradation and loss is widely recognized as the single largest threat to biodiversity in Canada and globally.”²¹⁴ The report focussed on effective conservation groups and actions, and concluded by stating that the “Government of Canada can show leadership by making habitat conservation a national priority and finalizing the [National Conservation Plan].”²¹⁵ Since the report was tabled, the government has finalized the National Conservation Plan.²¹⁶ As part of the study on licensed hunting and trapping in Canada, several witnesses expressed support for the National Conservation Plan and called for increased funding,²¹⁷ including for the wetland conservation fund.²¹⁸

208 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

209 [Ibid.](#)

210 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

211 [Ibid.](#)

212 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Thompson); ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce); and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc).

213 ENVI, [Terrestrial Habitat Conservation in Canada](#), Second Report, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, February 2014.

214 [Ibid.](#), p. 1, citing Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, [Global Biodiversity Outlook 3](#), 2010 and Government of Canada, [Canada’s 4th National Report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity](#).

215 [Ibid.](#), p. 29.

216 See Government of Canada, [Conserve, Restore and Connect with Nature](#).

217 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks).

218 [Ibid.](#) (Brennan).

Reasons for loss and degradation of habitat and solutions to the problem were not addressed in detail in this study as they were in the Committee's earlier report on the subject; however, witnesses did mention to the Committee some different approaches toward improving habitat conservation in Canada. Methods to share these approaches and to develop conservation policy were also suggested. Chief among the methods to improve habitat was land-use planning.

Several witnesses identified competing interests for land as a barrier to habitat conservation.²¹⁹ They testified that, in many cases, environmental needs and concerns come second to industrial needs.²²⁰ It was also noted that some of the value of habitat protection extends beyond conserving wildlife for sustainable use to other values. The use of wetlands for flood control, for example, was of particular interest. Land-use planning, informed by research, was seen as necessary in order to achieve practical solutions to these competing values and interests.²²¹

A professor from the University of Alberta described for the Committee new tools that are being developed to improve land-use planning by finding better ways to make industrial development, such as oil and gas activities, compatible with maintaining wildlife on the land.²²² One example mentioned was offsetting, which involves industry investing in conservation properties in order to offset the consequences of land taken up for industrial development where conservation is either not possible or economically not feasible. The professor described how the Alberta Conservation Association manages a number of such conservation properties.²²³

Wetlands were of particular interest to some of the witnesses who appeared, both for their value as habitat, including for waterfowl, and for their value in mitigating flooding. In support of the federal government taking action now to protect wetlands before flooding occurs, a witness reasoned as follows: "You guys are going to be paying the tab at the end of the day. Why don't you pay it at the beginning of the day? It's going to be a smaller tab."²²⁴

Conservation of habitat and, in particular, implementation of land-use planning, is largely under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. However, various suggestions were made regarding ways by which the federal government could seek to improve land-use planning and habitat conservation for sustainable use. For instance, a representative from Ducks Unlimited suggested that it is time for the federal government to "take another look" at its 1996 wetland policy.²²⁵ He also suggested that the federal government should "show

219 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry) and (Crabbe).

220 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry) and (Crabbe).

221 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce). Also see April 28, 2015, [Evidence](#) (Lowry).

222 [Ibid.](#) (Boyce).

223 [Ibid.](#)

224 [Ibid.](#) (Olson).

225 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Brennan).

leadership with its provincial counterparts” with a view to seeing wetland policies backed by legislation and regulation in every jurisdiction in Canada.²²⁶

Another witness suggested that more research is needed to find the most strategic way to manage lands for flood protection and for grazing while simultaneously protecting wildlife habitat.²²⁷ The witness suggested that Canada should implement an expert panel of the Royal Society of Canada jointly with the American National Research Council “to develop a strategy for land-use planning in western North America.”²²⁸

It was also suggested that the 150th anniversary of Confederation would be a good time to hold another national conference on wildlife and habitat, similar to the one held in 2012.²²⁹ A witness testified that the last such conference resulted in the establishment of the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel, which has facilitated information-sharing, allowed for greater public participation and resulted in significant economic benefits.²³⁰

2. Money Raised from Hunters and Trappers through Licence, Permit and Stamp Sales

Through the purchase of licences, permits and stamps, hunters and trappers provide millions of dollars for conservation projects and wildlife research across Canada.²³¹ For example, in Ontario, hunting, trapping and fishing licence fees and fines — about \$70 million every year since 1995 — are invested in fish and wildlife management.²³²

As the Committee heard, the hunting and angling community sometimes asks that the price of licences, permits or stamps be raised in order to increase funding for conservation. In Quebec, a number of years ago “hunters, anglers, trappers and all the major wildlife organizations asked the government to increase the cost of permits and to give a portion of that increase back to wildlife.”²³³ Accordingly, the government instituted a financial measure known as “Réinvestissement dans le domaine de la faune”, which has resulted in 85% of the increase being invested in wildlife.²³⁴

Similarly, in Nova Scotia, hunters and trappers came up with the idea of a conservation stamp and subsequently requested that the price be increased from \$3 to \$5.²³⁵ According to a witness from that province, the stamp raised over \$275,000 in

226 [Ibid.](#)

227 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

228 [Ibid.](#) Another witness supported this idea. See ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

229 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Latraverse).

230 [Ibid.](#)

231 See ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

232 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

233 [Ibid.](#) (Latraverse).

234 [Ibid.](#)

235 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers).

the past season.²³⁶ The witness testified that this money is “spent by a committee led by hunters on wildlife education, research, and the purchase of land.”²³⁷ Over the last 15 years, stamp funds have generated \$2 million and “given directly to university students to help them with their research on wildlife species,”²³⁸ many of which are not hunted.²³⁹

In Saskatchewan, hunters voluntarily offered to pay more for their hunting licences in order to create, in 1970, what is now known as the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund.²⁴⁰ The Committee heard that, today, 30% of all licence sales, which is about \$4.5 million, is matched by funding from non-governmental organizations and used to operate a provincial hatchery and provide education, research and program development in support of fisheries and habitat enhancement and securement.²⁴¹

From Alberta, the Committee heard from a professor at the University of Alberta, whose position “was endowed by the Alberta Conservation Association, with revenues from the sale of hunting and fishing licences in Alberta.”²⁴² He explained that “the Alberta Conservation Association was founded in 1997 to ensure that revenues from the sale of hunting and fishing licences were allocated to conservation rather than going into provincial coffers.”²⁴³

In New Brunswick, the sale of conservation vehicle licence plates supplements funds raised from a portion of the hunting licence fee to provide “funding in excess of \$1.2 million annually, which is distributed to non-profit groups for wildlife conservation and educational projects, including trapping courses and other projects.”²⁴⁴

At the federal level, waterfowl hunters must purchase a Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp for \$8.50 every year to validate their migratory game bird hunting permits.²⁴⁵ Although anyone can purchase a stamp, birders and other people rarely do so.²⁴⁶ Yet the funds raised from stamp sales benefit Canadian society as a whole.²⁴⁷ The majority of proceeds from stamp sales fund a grant program administered by Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC), a national, non-profit conservation organization.

236 [Ibid.](#)

237 [Ibid.](#)

238 [Ibid.](#)

239 [Ibid.](#)

240 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

241 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

242 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

243 [Ibid.](#)

244 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (LeBlanc).

245 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

246 [Ibid.](#) (Latraverse).

247 [Ibid.](#)

A representative from WHC quantified the extent of funds from stamp sales that have been invested in conservation:

Since 1985, [WHC] has invested over \$50 million supporting more than 1,500 conservation projects across Canada. In 2013-14, \$1.5 million in WHC grant funds leveraged over \$11.3 million in additional partner revenue, which resulted in more than 96,000 acres of wildlife habitat conserved across Canada. Conservation projects also support local and regional economies.²⁴⁸

The WHC representative testified that waterfowl hunters are “generally very supportive of the stamp because they know they are contributing directly to on-the-ground efforts in habitat conservation and stewardship.”²⁴⁹ In fact, according to a government representative, the federal Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel is recommending that the minister consider “increasing the stamp fee to generate even more funds for conservation.”²⁵⁰ A witness mentioned, for the sake of comparison, that the United States has recently increased the cost of their equivalent duck stamp from \$15 to \$25.²⁵¹

A number of witnesses described other taxing mechanisms used in the United States to raise revenue for conservation, namely the *Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937*, commonly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act for its sponsors, and on the fisheries side, the *Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act*, commonly known as the Dingell-Johnson Act.²⁵² The Pittman-Robertson Act creates an 11% excise tax on hunting equipment, firearms and ammunition.²⁵³ This funding is allocated to the states “on a 25%:75% match, 75% coming from federal revenues.”²⁵⁴ The states use the funding for wildlife education, monitoring and research.²⁵⁵

A witness described the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson programs as having “been extremely important in ensuring a steady flow of funds for wildlife and fisheries.”²⁵⁶ He suggested that this type of funding is “urgently needed in Canada.”²⁵⁷ In fact, he suggested that Canada “do it better than the U.S.A. by expanding the base to include camping equipment, binoculars, and other outdoor equipment, and then provide broader support, including for non-game species.”²⁵⁸

248 [Ibid.](#) (Mack).

249 [Ibid.](#)

250 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

251 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

252 For example, see ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers).

253 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Boyce).

254 [Ibid.](#)

255 [Ibid.](#)

256 [Ibid.](#)

257 [Ibid.](#)

258 [Ibid.](#)

Other witnesses also considered the possibility of imposing such an excise tax in Canada.²⁵⁹ However, one witness cautioned that it would have to be “done very carefully” in order not to hurt the Canadian retail sector. He stated that “it’s hard to compete with the American retailers as it is.”²⁶⁰

3. Habitat Conserved with the Support of Hunters and Trappers

In addition to paying for general conservation efforts through licence, permit and stamp sales, many hunting and trapping organizations actively fundraise, providing millions of dollars more specifically for habitat conservation. Many of the provincial and territorial wildlife federations — also known as fish and game associations — have established their own foundations for purchasing or receiving habitat lands to hold and conserve in perpetuity for the benefit of society and the environment. Lands are typically acquired through contributions and fund-raising efforts of members, who typically work as volunteer stewards managing lands that have been acquired.

For example, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation’s habitat foundation has conserved over 30,000 acres [12,140 hectares] of habitat for all types of wildlife. A representative from that organization stated that the federation’s clubs and members “are really passionate and committed to making sure that wild places are here forever.”²⁶¹

Similarly, the Alberta Fish and Game Association established its Wildlife Trust Fund in 1983 when the association saw a need to conserve habitat that “was quickly being reallocated toward industrial, commercial, and even private interests, as well as agriculture.”²⁶² The association now partners with other organizations to acquire properties that have been assessed for their ecological and habitat significance. Today, the land trust fund holds over 100 properties spread over 40,000 acres [16,187 hectares] in the province.²⁶³ This conservation land is open all year long to the public to enjoy for any type of activity, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, photography or just enjoying the outdoors.²⁶⁴

A representative from the Alberta Fish and Game Association told the Committee about other programs the organization operates in support of habitat conservation. Under the Operation Grassland Community program, the association works with landowners on the mixed grass area of southeastern Alberta “to help educate them on ways to manage the property, with the ecological value of the property in mind.”²⁶⁵

259 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 12, 2015 (Rodgers) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

260 [Ibid.](#) (Grinde).

261 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Olson).

262 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Lowry).

263 [Ibid.](#)

264 [Ibid.](#)

265 [Ibid.](#)

The association has concluded over 300 agreements with landowners “who have plans in place to help preserve the ecological value of these lands.”²⁶⁶

The Alberta Fish and Game Association also operates the Antelope Creek Ranch in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, and Habitat Canada.²⁶⁷ This 5,500-acre ranch demonstrates how interests such as oil and gas development, livestock raising and recreation can be carried out while maintaining habitat for wildlife.²⁶⁸

A representative from the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation told the Committee about the lands that the organization has conserved under its Habitat Trust Fund. The federation currently holds title to over 60,000 acres [24,281 hectares] of habitat in the province, and it manages an additional 100,000 acres [40,468 hectares], most of which were purchased through the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund.²⁶⁹ These lands are open to the public for outdoor activities, including hunting, fishing, hiking and photography.²⁷⁰

In addition to supporting wildlife federations and fish and game associations, the sustainable use community has also established or substantially supports other organizations that focus on habitat conservation.

One of the most significant conservation programs discussed during the study is the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), “an international partnership that conserves and protects wetland and upland habitats, and associated waterfowl populations by connecting people with nature.”²⁷¹ A witness described this plan as being “considered unique globally.”²⁷² He explained that “the success of the plan is due in large part to the contribution and support of the hunting communities in Canada, the U.S. and now in Mexico, which have been instrumental in securing habitats for waterfowl.”²⁷³ According to a government representative:

Since the establishment of the plan, over 8 million hectares of wetland and associated uplands have been permanently secured in Canada, while an additional 41 million hectares have been directly influenced through stewardship activities.²⁷⁴

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development testified that assessments of the NAWMP conclude that the plan “has played an important role in the

266 [Ibid.](#)

267 [Ibid.](#)

268 [Ibid.](#)

269 [Ibid.](#) (Crabbe).

270 [Ibid.](#)

271 North American Waterfowl Management Plan–Canada, [Welcome to NAWMP Canada](#).

272 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

273 [Ibid.](#)

274 [Ibid.](#)

recovery of waterfowl and in the protection of wetlands in Canada.”²⁷⁵ She stated that “the plan’s success shows how results can be achieved through partnerships, concerted efforts over the long term, and shared conservation objectives.”²⁷⁶

Ducks Unlimited Canada is another successful conservation organization that testified as part of the study. A representative from that organization explained how Ducks Unlimited in North America “resulted from the responsible activities of conservation-minded hunters who were deeply concerned by the dramatic decline in wetland habitat and the need for strong waterfowl and wildlife populations.”²⁷⁷ Ducks Unlimited enters into voluntary conservation agreements with private landowners to do restoration work on the land while educating landowners about the hydrological cycle of their wetlands.²⁷⁸ In order to carry out this work, the organization raises money through fundraising and through its major gift program, and it leverages the funding of other partners, such as businesses and governments. Landowners also invest in the program. The organization’s programs are said to have been “very successful” and have conserved about 6.2 million acres [2.5 million hectares] in Canada, many of which were conserved working with private landowners.²⁷⁹

Another successful and large-scale wildlife enhancement program that centres on partnerships with private landowners is the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program. According to a representative from Delta Waterfowl Foundation, one of the founding partners of the program, the evolution of ALUS began with conversations between farmers and the hunting community, “who were seeking to conserve more habitat on a landscape that is for the most part privately owned.”²⁸⁰ The witness explained how the ALUS model is respectful of property rights.²⁸¹ It provides incentives to landowners to take conservation measures on their private property for the benefit not just of hunters, but for society at large. He described the spread of ALUS across the country, with one project in Manitoba, two in Saskatchewan, three in Alberta and an ALUS program operating province-wide in Prince Edward Island.²⁸² In that province, 85% of agricultural producers are enrolled in the program, which encourages super-buffers around potato fields to prevent run-off into streams.²⁸³

In addition to programs and organizations such as the NAWMP, Ducks Unlimited and ALUS that operate on a large scale, the Committee heard testimony about some of

275 [Ibid.](#) (Gelfand).

276 [Ibid.](#)

277 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Weeks).

278 [Ibid.](#) (Brennan).

279 [Ibid.](#)

280 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Scarth).

281 [Ibid.](#)

282 [Ibid.](#)

283 [Ibid.](#)

the numerous smaller-scale projects being carried out, across the country, to conserve and enhance wildlife habitat.

For example, the Committee heard about a project in Ontario being carried out by the Credit Valley Conservation Foundation. That organization is removing 10,000 cubic meters of sediment from a marsh to restore native aquatic species. As well, the program involves installing habitat structures to improve spawning of warm-water fish in the Port Credit area.²⁸⁴

In Saskatchewan, the Water Security Agency is restoring wetlands in watersheds such as the Assiniboine, the Lower Souris and the Lower Qu'Appelle, which have experienced flooding. In addition to creating habitat, restoring these wetlands is expected to reduce flooding in the future.²⁸⁵

In British Columbia, the Squamish River Watershed Society is “implementing a Squamish central estuary wetland restoration project,” while on the Atlantic coast, the Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation is carrying out the “Petite Rivière watershed shale pit remediation and wetland expansion project.”²⁸⁶

An example in Quebec of a wildlife enhancement project that was mentioned involves restoring wetlands on private agricultural lands. The Fondation de la faune du Québec is carrying out this program primarily in the St. Lawrence and the Lac St-Jean agricultural plains areas.²⁸⁷

Finally, the Committee heard from an outfitter of the Northwest Territories about an organization to which he belongs. The Wild Sheep Foundation is an American organization, but it has Canadian chapters and affiliates. Every year, that organization raises thousands of dollars in Canada to invest in studies and habitat improvement.²⁸⁸

C. North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

The testimony of many witnesses regarding the link between hunting and trapping and conservation might be summed up as support for the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which several witnesses explicitly mentioned.²⁸⁹ That model is based on the assertion that the sustainable use community has historically taken the lead when it comes to conservation.²⁹⁰ As expressed by one witness:

284 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 10, 2015 (McLean).

285 [Ibid.](#)

286 [Ibid.](#)

287 [Ibid.](#)

288 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

289 [Ibid.](#) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

290 [Ibid.](#) (Grinde).

[Hunters, trappers and anglers] were among the first recognized conservationists in North America dating back to the late 1800s. At a time when commercialization of wildlife was destroying species at an unprecedented pace, hunters, trappers, and anglers stood up and cried, “Enough”. Leaders such as Wilfrid Laurier and Theodore Roosevelt, supported by hunters, trappers, and anglers, viewed conservation of our wildlife not only as a matter of national concern, but as a matter of national relevance. Hunters, trappers, and anglers sought to improve the worth of the two countries and recognized that prudent, wise use of natural resources and conservation of wildlife were signatures of progressive leadership.²⁹¹

One witness summed up the historical evolution of conservation stating: “If hunters hadn't led that charge, we wouldn't have the wildlife that we do today.”²⁹² A concrete example of the success of this conservation movement is found in the NAWMP, which has resulted in what was described as a “turnaround” in the duck population of North America over the last 30 years.²⁹³

As a cautionary tale, a witness compared the success of North American Model of Wildlife Conservation to the failure of a Kenyan decision, in 1977, to ban hunting.²⁹⁴ According to the witness, following that decision large wildlife populations that the ban was intended to preserve declined by 70 to 80%.²⁹⁵ He testified that a movement to reinstitute hunting is developing in Kenya today because “hunters are the rubber on the road when it comes to conserving our wildlife.”²⁹⁶ According to the witness, unlike the Kenyan example, the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation puts a value on wildlife — especially to people who live in rural areas — which provides the incentive for people to want to conserve it so they can use it.²⁹⁷

A representative from Wildlife Habitat Canada testified that promoting and increasing participation in waterfowl hunting in Canada could lead to further gains in wildlife habitat conservation in this country.²⁹⁸ The same might be said about hunting and trapping more generally.

291 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 24, 2015 (Farrant).

292 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

293 ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 28, 2015 (Crabbe).

294 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde).

295 [Ibid.](#)

296 [Ibid.](#)

297 [Ibid.](#)

298 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 26, 2015 (Mack).

CONCLUSION

Hunting and trapping support many Canadians, both economically and spiritually. The connection that hunters and trappers feel to the land is manifest in their untiring conservation efforts.

During the study, Committee members asked witnesses about the federal role in hunting and trapping. In addition to regulating migratory birds and taking responsibility for Aboriginal affairs and international trade and advocacy, witnesses commented that the federal government should continue to provide information and research that the provinces and territories need to plan for conservation and sustainable development.²⁹⁹

However, some witnesses called for another type of fundamental support. There was a common view that most Canadians do not appreciate the value of hunting and trapping, and that they do not know that hunters and trappers are core conservationists in Canada.

As summed up by a representative of Delta Waterfowl Foundation:

The linkage between hunting, fishing, trapping, and environment and sustainable development is a relationship that bears study as a success story in stimulating investments to the environment from those who enjoy it. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are too often an afterthought portrayed as in conflict or as activities that need to be curtailed in some manner to achieve conservation and the environmental goals, and nothing could be further from the truth. That hunters, anglers, and trappers are the first and best conservationists is a statement that is uncontroversial within our community.³⁰⁰

With this in mind, several witnesses called for more federal support of the hunting and trapping lifestyle.³⁰¹ As expressed by one witness: “We need to have the continued support of our government so that they understand who we are and what we do.”³⁰²

299 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 5, 2015 (Grinde). Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Yonge).

300 ENVI, [Evidence](#), March 31, 2015 (Scarth).

301 ENVI, [Evidence](#), May 7, 2015 (Yonge) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), April 23, 2015 (Gibb).

302 [Ibid.](#) (Gibb).

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada:

1. Continue to work collaboratively with provinces and territories to promote and advocate for hunting and trapping.
2. Explore options to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the economic value of hunting and trapping in Canada.
3. Ensure that habitat conservation programs also include conservation of populations of hunted and trapped species.
4. Communicate the benefits of hunting and trapping across Canada.
5. Educate Canadians on programs in Environment Canada that support hunting and trapping.
6. Support initiatives and programs that help to recruit new hunters and trappers.
7. Minimize red tape to make it easier for people to take up hunting.
8. Implement incentive-based programs to conserve habitat on the working landscape.
9. Investigate the use of best practices amongst other levels of government that manage nuisance wildlife.
10. Implement programs that enhance the populations of wildlife species that are hunted and/or trapped, where appropriate to ensure sustainable use.
11. Continue to support the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel (HAAP).
12. Support holding a National Conference on Wildlife to help celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Canada.
13. Continue to provide funding that supports humane trap research and testing in Canada.

APPENDIX LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Department of the Environment</p> <p>Kevin J. Cash, Director General, Wildlife and Landscape Science, Science and Technology Branch</p> <p>Robert McLean, Executive Director, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environmental Stewardship Branch</p>	2015/03/10	46
<p>Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development</p> <p>Julie Gelfand, Commissioner</p> <p>James McKenzie, Principal</p>		
<p>New Brunswick Wildlife Federation</p> <p>Charles LeBlanc, President</p>	2015/03/12	47
<p>Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation</p> <p>Ward Samson, Member</p>		
<p>Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters</p> <p>Tony Rodgers, Executive Director</p>		
<p>Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters</p> <p>Greg Farrant, Manager, Government Affairs and Policy</p>	2015/03/24	48
<p>Prince Edward Island Wildlife Federation</p> <p>Duncan Crawford, President</p>		
<p>Ducks Unlimited Canada</p> <p>James Brennan, Director, Government Affairs</p> <p>Gregory Weeks, Secretary, National Board of Directors</p>	2015/03/26	49
<p>Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)</p> <p>Brian Craik, Director, Federal Relations</p>		
<p>Quebec Federation of Anglers and Hunters</p> <p>Pierre Latraverse, President</p>		
<p>Wildlife Habitat Canada</p> <p>Cameron Mack, Executive Director</p>		
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Mark Boyce, Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta</p>	2015/03/31	50

Delta Waterfowl Foundation	2015/03/31	50
Jonathan Scarth, Senior Vice-President		
Manitoba Wildlife Federation		
Rob Olson, Managing Director		
Fur Institute of Canada	2015/04/23	51
Dion Dakins, Chair, Sealing Committee		
Jim Gibb, Chair, Communications Committee		
Gregory Thompson, Advisor		
International Fur Federation		
Nancy Daigneault, Vice President, Americas		
North American Fur Auctions		
Robert Cahill, Senior Vice President		
The Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals		
Michael Howie, Director of Digital Content and Special Projects		
Alberta Fish and Game Association	2015/04/28	52
Wayne Lowry, President		
Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation		
Darrell Crabbe, Executive Director		
Yukon Fish and Game Association		
Gordon Zealand, Executive Director		
Association of Mackenzie Mountains Outfitters	2015/05/05	53
Harold Grinde, President		
Cabela's Canada	2015/05/07	54
Darin Brecht, Director, Finance & E-Commerce, Canadian Division		
John Tramburg, Vice President, Cabela's Canada & Outdoor Services, Canadian Division		
Government of the Northwest Territories		
Jamie Chambers, Head, Field Support Unit, Environment and Natural Resources		
Evan Walz, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment and Natural Resources		
Lynda Yonge, Director, Wildlife Division, Environment and Natural Resources		

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 58 and 60](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Harold Albrecht

Chair

The New Democratic Party members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development provide the following as their comments on the committee's report on Licenses Hunting and Trapping in Canada.

New Democrats support and encourage Canadians to spend time enjoying Canada's great outdoors. We see it as a privilege that Canada's vast unspoilt wilderness allows for Canadians to continue these historical activities. Though as Evan Walz Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment and Natural Resources Government of Northwest Territories noted, "I did mention that it's [trapping] not a primary source of income for most people, it's secondary or tertiary. It supplements income in other areas."

New Democrats recognize and salute the fact that hunters and trappers have played an important role in conservation of wildlife habitat, which complements the vital and important role carried out by government agencies through regulation, enforcement, research and environmental monitoring and protection. It is in this role of ensuring a sustainable environment that the federal government can play its most important role.

John Tramburg, Vice President, Cabela's Canada & Outdoor Services, Canadian Division said, "Environmental sustainability is not only critical from a retailing perspective but also, for Darin and me and a variety of our outfitters across our company, a matter of who we are. It's what we do in our spare time as well as in our professional lives. Lifestyles across generations are woven into the outdoors."

Witnesses mentioned the important role played by federal legislation like the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, which for nearly 100 years has regulated the harvesting of hundreds of bird species which travel across the Canada/United States border. The NDP supports legislation which protects wildlife populations and wildlife habitat.

We also recognize the importance of maintaining and protecting the un-restricted Aboriginal right to hunt and trap established through the nation to nation treaty process. As relations with Aboriginal people is an exclusive federal jurisdiction it is incumbent on the federal government to ensure these rights are not eroded and this nation to nation relationship is maintained. We also recognize that due to the absence of this nation to nation relationship between the Crown and non-Aboriginal Canadians this same right is not extended to all citizens.

It is also important for the federal government to play a lead role in environmental research and monitoring.

"It's assistance with funding for research, in some cases for baseline data. We are a really big territory. We do have a research program in place, but it's difficult. It is extremely expensive, because it is such a big territory. In some cases, we have a hard time getting funding even just to get baseline data so that we can monitor what's happening. Money for continuing to monitor would be really helpful.

It's not so much for research itself, because we do have researchers here, and we work with our co-management partners here. We do have four settled land claim agreements. We have co-management boards set up in those areas that set our research priorities. They tend to be underfunded with respect to the work they can do with wildlife. Getting access to funding so that research could be done by the co-management boards and the government here would be really helpful to us," said Lynda Yonge, Director, Wildlife Division, Environment and Natural Resources GNWT

Finally it is vital to understand that climate change is have an impact on wildlife habitat across Canada though the end result of these changes are still unknown as Lynda Yonge said, "We are seeing changes. We don't know what the long-term effects of those changes will be. We're monitoring that, but we're not yet in a position to be able to say what they will be."

Recommendations:

1. In order to ensure healthy wildlife populations and a sustainable environment protecting habitat it is recommended that the Government of Canada initiate and provide funding for wildlife research and monitoring, particularly in the area of the impact of climate change on habitat.
2. As federal legislation has played an important role in maintaining healthy wildlife populations and a sustainable environment it is recommend the Government of Canada support and enhance laws which protect Canada's environment and wildlife.
3. Due to the special role hunting and trapping plays in the culture of Canada's Aboriginal people it is recommended that the Government of Canada takes active steps to ensure the hunting and trapping rights of Canadian Aboriginal people which were established through nation to nation treaties.

Liberal Party of Canada Dissenting Report

The Liberal Party of Canada submits a dissenting report to underscore concerns with the shortcomings of this study and the approach that has been taken by this Committee in general.

Committees have two missions. First, they are tasked with acquiring sufficient knowledge on a given subject to thoroughly vet government legislation for correctness, diligence and accuracy. Secondly, committees are expected to demonstrate leadership and vision by putting forward comprehensive and workable solutions to national challenges and real-world problems. It's on this second mandate that this Committee has most recently failed.

The Committee has spent limited time in this session on substantive issues such as curbing climate change, creating a clean energy future, reviving the health of our oceans, defending endangered wildlife and habitat, ensuring safe and sufficient water supplies, and fostering sustainable communities. Despite this, the Conservative Members of the Committee—presumably on instructions from the Chief Government Whip—opted for a superficial study on licensed hunting and trapping in Canada.

To be clear, fishing, hunting and trapping are heritage activities that provided the foundations on which our nation was originally established. These activities remain deeply rooted in Canadian culture and identity, while also providing significant ecological, social, trade and economic benefits for Canadians. There is no denying this fact. Eight-million Canadians trap, hunt or fish—more than those who play golf and hockey combined. The sector contributes nearly \$15-billion to the economy annually and, when undertaken and managed in a manner based on science and ethical conservation, provides thousands of sustainable jobs. There's nothing wrong with the Committee exploring the long-term future of these activities, but there's no point in nibbling at the edges of any subject matter, especially if it falls under limited federal jurisdiction. Unfortunately, that is precisely what this report does.

The Liberal Party of Canada supports the thirteen recommendations contained in this report. Broadly speaking, the recommendations are on the level of motherhood and apple pie. Unfortunately, many of the recommendations are superficial and of limited practical purpose when gauged against the significant challenges facing the sector. There are also concerns that the independence of the committee process has been used to justify government decisions that have already been taken or announced. In this context, the long-standing expectation that committees should demonstrate leadership and vision by putting forward comprehensive and workable solutions to national challenges has been entirely abdicated by the Conservatives on this Committee.

For example, the Committee has recommended that the government educate Canadians on Environment Canada programs that support hunting and trapping. This sounds reasonable, but Members of the Committee know the recommendation will be used to justify new spending on advertising. Government spending on advertising has reached near scandalous levels and new expenditures on advertising must be dissuaded. The Liberal Party would much rather see limited government resources invested in actual program delivery. To date, this Conservative government has spent \$1-billion on ad-hoc partisan ads of little or no measurable public value. In

contrast, Canada spends only a fraction of that total on items such as invasive species control, which would, if fully-funded, immeasurably assist Canadian anglers, hunters, furriers, and all those interested in the long-term, sustainable and ethical management of Canada's natural resources and ecosystems. To put this into perspective, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) annually administers programming designed to slow the progress of invasive species; promote a scientific, legal, safe and well-managed hunt; and educate Canadians on the importance of conservation. The money that this Conservative government has already spent on "Economic Action Plan" advertising during their tenure represents more than 50 years of the total operational budget of the OFAH. If the government or the Conservative members on the Committee were genuinely serious about fostering and expanding an industry that contributes so much to Canada's social, cultural, trade and economic structures, then this imbalance would have been addressed rather than made worse.

Furthermore, the report's twelfth recommendation endorses holding a National Conference on Wildlife to help celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Canada. It is difficult to see how holding a one-day symposium does anything substantial for the long-term viability of the sectors. Worse yet, the government already made this promise public to the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel (HAAP) on June 1st, 2015. Instead of a re-announcement of a decision already made, the industry would be better served with a recommendation to address the current trade challenges faced by the fur industry in places such as Russia or China, or with a recommendation responding to the negative toll caused by issues of recent political and economic instability. These facts again lead one to conclude that the independence of the committee process has been hijacked. Instead of finding new, innovative, and practical solutions to real problems affecting the industry and the environment, this report is merely a tool for justifying government decisions that have already been announced. The entire process of preparing this report has been shallow, artificial and without genuine value to the sector or to the environment on which sector participants rely.

If the government Members of the Committee were indeed serious about bolstering the future of the sector, protecting the environment, and punishing those who work to thwart legitimate and responsible anglers, hunters and trappers, they would have acted accordingly. Recommendations dealing with domestic and international invasive species control; leadership on reciprocity as it relates to the pan-Canadian punishment of convicted offenders; and the role of cervid farms in the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease would have been far more practical. These are each serious and long-standing issues that the Government of Canada has a direct role in addressing, yet has refused to act. In the case of Chronic Wasting Disease, governments are actually funding cervid farms, despite the fact they are known to perpetuate the spread of a disease that is a direct threat to wild animal populations of deer and elk. By ignoring these matters, this Committee has done a disservice to the environment and to anglers, hunters and trappers everywhere.

The Liberal Party of Canada will continue to strive for better results and it is hoped that all Committee Members are prepared to do likewise in future studies undertaken by the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. Those engaged in licensed hunting and trapping in Canada expect better and the Committee is capable of doing more that has become the norm over the course of this Session.