



**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming  
Federal Budget**

**By: Climate Action Groups of Bruce-Grey Owen Sound**

**August 2020**

**List of Recommendations:**

1. Foster carbon offset trading/payment systems that reward farmers and other landowners for creating carbon sinks.
2. Ensure that public resources and capacities such as our Conservation Authorities, indigenous communities, federal parkland and the Department of National Defence encourage and enable sequestration through “rewilding” of land in order to increase the carbon storage capacity of the Grey-Bruce landscape.
3. Administer the “2 billion trees over 10 years” project according to land mass; allocate necessary resources to shoreline restoration.

## **Replenishing our natural carbon bank account**

### **Context**

To use a banking metaphor, attention on climate change has been focused on reducing bank withdrawals (GHGs) as opposed to making deposits (sequestration of carbon dioxide). However, more recently sequestration as an effective measure to create sustainable jobs and reduce GHG in our atmosphere is finally being recognized.

### **Recommendation 1: Carbon offset payments to create carbon sinks**

1. A new and additional revenue stream is needed to maintain the existence of the family farm. In rural Ontario, a large transfer of land is about to occur as farmers retire. If the next generation cannot afford to buy the farm because farming provides an inadequate revenue stream, land may fall to agribusiness, and the family farm will be lost. What we need is long-term land trusts where farmer-owners are able to ensure responsible use of the land, the health of the soil, and no further habitat loss. In addition, offset payments would reduce the pressure to engage in damaging farming practices such as the use of heavy equipment tillage practices and heavy concentrations of fertilizer and toxic herbicides and pesticides. The impact of building soil health is enormous. We may find not only that the soil becomes an incredible carbon sink (up to 7 times their current abilities) but also offer the Canadian community nutrient-rich foods without chemical residues.

### **Recommendation 2. Promote sequestration through “rewilding.”**

We advise that funding be allocated to projects that promote the “rewilding” of unused, moribund farmland to soak up carbon and to carbonize Canadian landscapes from the ground up.

The IPCC states that as much as 25% of human-induced GHG emissions are caused by unsustainable land use. Programs in Australia, the UK and Europe are targeting old agricultural land and replenishing its natural biodiversity (the variety of living things) by returning it to natural terrains such as peatland, bog, moor, grassland, meadow, and integrated forests, using indigenous species of plants. Rewilding projects can have as their goal maximizing the carbon sequestration capacities of targeted sites using site-appropriate, up-to-date science. (It is now known, for example, that grasses as they age and build the soil in which they are embedded, are better at sequestering carbon than trees per hectare.) In addition,

rewilding can help to reduce negative impacts of intensive agriculture including soil degradation, water pollution, and insect pollinator declines.

The cost is no more than the cost of planting trees, which is far less than the cost of lowering the equivalent amount of greenhouse gas emissions created through human habits, lifestyle and technology. The result of “rewilding” is the enhanced health of the area, and is cumulative, so neighbouring areas suffer less from climate change.

Farmers whose unusable land is rewilded and converted to sequestering practices could earn carbon credits. And landowners of any description, urban or rural, whose properties, whether recreational, residential or commercial, are fully or partially rewilded, could also earn carbon credits.

### **Recommendation 3: Tree-planting and long-term shoreline restoration:**

Dollars for the tree planting program need to be allocated based on land mass, for Grey-Bruce and elsewhere in Canada.

Funds are needed to restore degraded and fragile lost habitat on the many shorelines of Grey-Bruce. Saugeen Ojibway Nations are called for natural, long-term solutions in the face of constant emergency repairs. The shorelines act as a filtration system for agricultural and urban runoff.

### **The Climate Action Groups of Bruce-Grey Owen Sound**

Over the past two years, municipality-based climate action groups have been formed and are meeting in the riding of Bruce-Grey Owen Sound. Our mandates centre on connecting people, projects and place to build climate knowledge and take local action. We work together when necessary to promote knowledge of our communities at the provincial and federal levels.