



**Written Submission for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-Budget Consultations**

Submitted By: Nature Canada

Date: July 28, 2020

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Recommendation 1:** Make immediate job-creating recovery investments (6-18 months) in the nature economy through ready to-go projects that maximize biodiversity, mitigation and adaptation potential. This includes supporting the job creation and economic value of nature-based tourism, a long term and scaled-up Indigenous Guardian program, reforestation along seismic lines in boreal caribou ranges as well as Southern or urban areas, and major habitat restoration initiatives in grasslands, wetlands and coastal ecosystems.
- **Recommendation 2:** Deliver on Canada's commitment to protect 25% of Canada's land and freshwater by 2025 by investing \$1.7 billion over five years:
 - \$700 million in the next two years (2020-2022)
 - \$1 billion over three years (2022-2025)
- **Recommendation 3:** Invest in and lay out a strategy to achieve Canada's 2030 targets on nature and climate, including Canada's commitment to protect 30% of Canada's land and freshwater by 2030 by committing to a plan to invest \$1.6 billion over 2025-2030. Assess the potential for new programs such as a national natural infrastructure fund and a national habitat restoration program.
- **Recommendation 4:** Convene an expert group on nature restoration that can screen potential stimulus investments for relative biodiversity, climate and well-being values.
- **Recommendation 5:** Ensure a nature lens is applied consistently by federal ministries as they plan recovery initiatives in order to identify opportunities to provide industry partners and other levels of government the support and incentives they need to play an active role in protecting and restoring critical natural areas.

About Nature Canada

Nature Canada is one of the oldest national nature conservation charities in Canada. For 80 years, Nature Canada has helped protect over 110 million acres of parks and wildlife areas in Canada and countless species. Today, Nature Canada represents a network of over 100,000 members and supporters and more than 800 nature organizations across the country.

This brief draws from an open letter submitted to Prime Minister Trudeau on July 10th 2020 by 235 nature organizations from across the country including Nature Canada.¹

Canada's Recovery and the Nature Economy

As Canada works to emerge from the unprecedented disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in nature and biodiversity on our lands and in our ocean can create jobs, and must be an essential part of an economic recovery and a sustainable future. Canada is in a particularly strong position to lead global efforts in this regard. We call on the government to follow through on its commitments to increase protection of lands, freshwater, and ocean, and embrace nature-based climate solutions, and urge new investments be made to achieve these outcomes.

This country's ecosystems – forests, wetlands, grasslands, ocean, lakes and rivers – and the biodiversity they support are essential to provide Canadians with clean air, clean water, healthy food, sustainable economic goods and services, and opportunities for work, play, mental health and physical wellbeing. These systems are also fundamental to the rights and title of Indigenous peoples and their protection can be an important component of Canada's overall reconciliation agenda.

A recent report from the World Economic Forum underscores the economic benefits of a nature-first approach to recovery from business and political leaders. The report notes that globally, as many as 400 million jobs and \$10 trillion in economic activity could be generated each year by 2030 by addressing nature and climate challenges, and supporting stimulus and business practices that prioritize a green recovery.

Canada's economic recovery from COVID-19 provides us with an opportunity to invest in the nature economy in a way that will create good jobs quickly, while simultaneously transforming our relationship with Canada's lands, waters and species. **Successful solutions will require Ottawa adopting a more intentional nature lens as it plans recovery strategies with provincial, territorial, Indigenous governments, as well as industry partners.**

The Value of Nature in Canada

Canada's natural bounty provides tremendous value and services to Canadians, and with real economic and social impacts.

Protected Areas Commitments

Protecting areas of high ecological value and importance to species at risk helps to increase resilience to climate change, supports adaptation, locks in sequestered carbon, avoids land use changes that

¹ <https://naturecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Nature-Conservation-Letter-to-PM-July-10-2020-EN.pdf>

generate the risk of a new pandemic,² and can provide recreation, tourism and employment opportunities. In all cases Indigenous-led or co-managed areas should be a priority including renewed long-term support for Indigenous Guardian programs. Canada's commitment to expand protected areas to 25 % of Canada's land, freshwater and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030 are critical goals.

Value of Responsible Forestry

Canada's forests cover 347 million hectares or 40% of Canada's landcover, accounting for 9% of the world's forests. They provide food, timber, medicines and other important services such as carbon sequestration, climate regulation and water filtration. The goods and services generated by Canada's boreal forests are estimated to be valued at \$703 billion per year.³ Reforming forestry to focus on getting high-value goods with minimum ecological disruption can improve the economic value for communities, preserve jobs, reduce direct GHG emissions and preserve critical habitat for endangered species. Protecting and restoring forests to support carbon markets and offsets is a viable option when done with rigorous criteria and monitoring. Restoring former log handling sites, southern forests and caribou habitat are high-potential areas for employment that benefits nature.

Value of Ocean and Freshwater Ecosystems

Canada's water system also provide tremendous economic value, and protecting our ocean and freshwater ecosystems and environments must be at the core of Canada's economic recovery plan. Canada's oceans economy directly contributes about \$31.65 billion annually to GDP⁴, while inland water systems also provide significant economic value, with the qualified economic value provided by the Great Lakes region alone over \$83 billion⁵. We urge the government to invest in the protection of natural waterways to ensure our ocean and freshwater economies remain sustainable for generations to come. This includes investments that transition aquaculture out of ecologically sensitive areas, including to land-based finfish aquaculture, to reduce harm to wild species and habitats, reduce industry costs for disease management and minimize production risks from storms, warming waters and ocean acidification.

Value of Eco Tourism

The tourism industry faces significant and lasting impacts from COVID-19, but it is a huge economic driver for Canada and nature is at the core of the Canadian tourism sector value add. In 2019, the tourism sector generated over \$102 billion in economic activity and supported over \$1.8 million jobs, and there is opportunity to help sustain this important industry through smart investment to safeguard Canada's natural beauty.⁶ Canadians spend more than \$14 billion annually on equipment, travel, lodging and other expenses to observe wildlife in Canada.⁷ In light of reduced international travel there will

² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341823093_COVID-19_and_protected_and_conserved_areas

³ Canadian Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO Chair on Community Sustainability: From Local to Global <https://ipolitics.ca/2020/07/08/investing-in-ecosystems-the-cornerstone-for-sustainable-renewal-of-the-canadian-economy/>

⁴ <https://www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans/news/2020/07/minister-jordan-highlights-importance-of-growing-canadas-ocean-economy.html>

⁵ <https://longpointbiosphere.com/download/Environment/krantz2.pdf>, 84.

⁶ TIAC 2019 Tourism Numbers Release

⁷ https://www.natureconservancy.ca/assets/documents/nat/Natural-Capital_2017_draft.pdf

likely be increased interest from Canadians to get outside and travel in Canada in a safe manner. According to a poll by Ipsos, 37% of Canadians are interested in travel and tourism within Canada, almost double the percentage that reported interest in traveling abroad in 2020.⁸ Now is a great time to re-envision a more sustainable tourism model that respects nature and empowers Canadians to reconnect with the amazing nature around them. Particular attention should be paid to northern tourism, including the burgeoning Indigenous tourism industry, which provides a valuable alternative for local economies otherwise dependent on natural resource extraction.

Building Back Nature and Battling Climate Change

As Canada charts its pathway to economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that we not abdicate our responsibility to combat the ongoing climate crisis.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change notes that nature will be essential for safeguarding and sequestering enough carbon to avoid catastrophic climate change. According to the IPCC, nature could absorb up to 20% of GHG emissions from now to 2050.⁹ Yet, in Canada, our ecosystems are projected to sequester less carbon in 2030 than ever before, jeopardizing our ability to meet our Paris climate target and keep warming below 2 degrees. This drop in sequestration is due to human disruption of the environment – the same kinds of disruption that also cause habitat loss and put species at risk. It is a stark reminder that we cannot take the condition of the environment and the services it provides for granted.

Implementing nature-based climate solutions that help to address the biodiversity and climate crises at the same time will be of significant benefit, especially where such solutions are informed by efforts to promote reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, gender and racial equality, and meeting the needs of Canada's most vulnerable communities.

Canada's Nature Recovery Action Plan

To reverse the continued degradation of nature and biodiversity and the services they provide we need to transform the relationship we have with Canada's lands, waters and species. And not just one place at a time, but at an ambitious and unprecedented scale. That means following through on our commitments to protected areas and nature based climate solutions with bold investments.

Using a nature lens, we urge the government to invest over the next six to 18 months in a variety of economic recovery solutions that support climate and biodiversity outcomes. Funding can be channeled through existing programs in Environment and Climate Change, Infrastructure and Communities, Fisheries and Oceans, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Agri-foods, and Indigenous Services Canada to expedite delivery.

Over the longer term, expert advice should be sought by relevant departments on how to structure programs and investments in order to achieve the transformative relationship between society and nature that is needed to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for Canadians. New programs for

⁸ Ipsos poll

⁹ IPCC Report

Nature-Based Climate Solutions and Natural Infrastructure may be advisable in order to reduce barriers to program utilization, get maximum benefit from dollars spent and have effective program evaluation.

Recognizing that the federal government faces numerous high-priority challenges over the coming months and, also, that financial resources are already strained, we recommend the following next steps.

We note these recommendations form part of those advocated by the Green Budget Coalition in their *Preliminary Recommendations for Recovery and Budget Actions in 2020-2021*¹⁰ and those submitted in the previously cited open letter to Prime Minister Trudeau sent July 10th 2020 by 235 nature organizations from across the country including Nature Canada.

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¹⁰ <https://greenbudget.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/06/Green-Budget-Coalition%E2%80%99s-Preliminary-Recommendations-for-Recovery-Budget-Actions-in-2020-21-2020-June-28.pdf>