



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

URBAN CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

**Harold Albrecht, M.P.
Chair**

APRIL 2013

41st PARLIAMENT, FIRST SESSION

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Standing Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site
at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

URBAN CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

**Harold Albrecht, M.P.
Chair**

APRIL 2013

41st PARLIAMENT, FIRST SESSION

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CHAIR

Harold Albrecht

VICE-CHAIRS

Kirsty Duncan

Megan Anissa Leslie

MEMBERS

François Choquette

James Lunney

François Pilon

Anne Minh-Thu Quach

Michelle Rempel

Robert Sopuck

Brian Storseth

Lawrence Toet

Stephen Woodworth

OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO PARTICIPATED

Mike Allen

Stella Ambler

Denis Blanchette

Tarik Brahmi

Ron Cannan

Hon. Irwin Cotler

Hon. Mark Eyking

Royal Galipeau

Parm Gill

Dan Harris

Laurin Liu

Pat Martin

Colin Mayes

Ted Opitz

Geoff Regan

Blake Richards

Hon. Judy Sgro

Jinny Jodindera Sims

Rathika Sitsabaiesan

Lise St-Denis

Bernard Trottier

Frank Valeriote

Mike Wallace

Mark Warawa

Rodney Weston

CLERKS OF THE COMMITTEE

Guillaume La Perrière

Marie-France Renaud

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Information and Research Service

Penny Becklumb, Analyst

Tim Williams, Analyst

Jed Chong, Research Assistant

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

has the honour to present its

SEVENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the Committee on Monday, October 1, 2012, the Committee has studied urban conservation practices in Canada and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

URBAN CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN CANADA	1
Introduction — The Meaning and Importance of Urban Conservation Practices in Canada	1
<i>Understanding the Term “Urban Conservation”</i>	2
<i>Considering “Protected Spaces”</i>	4
<i>Why Urban Conservation is Important</i>	5
Connecting Urban Canadians with Nature and Conservation	6
<i>Benefits to Children</i>	6
<i>Economic Benefits</i>	8
<i>Benefits for Human Health</i>	10
<i>Benefits for Biodiversity</i>	11
<i>The Goals of Connecting Urban Canadians with Nature and Conservation</i>	11
Rouge National Urban Park: A Step in the Right Direction	12
<i>The Role of Agriculture in Rouge Park</i>	13
<i>Public Consultations and Progress to Date</i>	13
<i>Witness Suggestions</i>	14
Best Practices: We All Have a Role to Play	15
<i>Challenges and Best Practices</i>	15
<i>The Importance of Partnerships and Holistic Thinking</i>	18
Improving the Environment Where Canadians Live: A Role for the Federal Government	21
<i>Federal Leadership</i>	22
<i>Knowledge Development and Sharing</i>	23
<i>Funding and Other Financial Incentives</i>	24
Conclusion	26
LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS	27
APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES	29
APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS	33
REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	35
SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA ..	37
SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA	39

URBAN CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN CANADA

Introduction — The Meaning and Importance of Urban Conservation Practices in Canada

Canada, like many other countries, is increasingly becoming a nation of city dwellers.

The total area of urban land in Canada almost doubled between 1971 and 2001. Approximately 80% of the Canadian population lives in urban areas, and that number is expected to increase to 90% by the year 2050. Over 60% of Canadians live in cities of more than 100,000 people.¹

Within cities, and elsewhere in Canada, children are spending less time outside in unstructured play.² Fewer Canadians than ever before are visiting national parks,³ and those who do visit them are older, mature adults.⁴ Overall, Canadians now spend approximately 95% of their time indoors.⁵

“We need to think about cities as important ecological areas themselves. More than half of the planet [population] is urban now. This is our future and we need to make these cities work.”

– Mr. Chris Manderson, Natural Area Management Lead, Parks, City of Calgary

When the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (the “Committee”) undertook a study on urban conservation practices in Canada in the fall of 2012, Committee members were aware of this trend towards the city. Committee members felt that it would be worthwhile to take a closer look specifically at urban conservation practices in Canada, having just completed a broader study to provide recommendations to the Minister of the Environment on the development of a national conservation plan. Since the population is trending towards the urban environment, Committee members understood that green spaces within those areas are becoming increasingly important; for many people, these spaces represent their primary, if not only, opportunity to experience nature.

1 House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (ENVI), [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, October 17, 2012 (Ms. Virginia Potter, Director General, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment). Also see ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, November 26, 2012 (Mr. Guy Garand, Managing Director, Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval); ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, October 31, 2012 (Mr. Kenneth Bennett, Former Environmental Manager, Environmental Planning and Protection, City of Surrey, As an Individual); ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Dr. Faisal Moola, Director General, Ontario and the North, David Suzuki Foundation); ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, October 24, 2012 (Mr. Michael Rosen President, Tree Canada); ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, October 22, 2012 (Mr. Mark Butler, Policy Director, Ecology Action Centre on behalf of Ms. Jennifer Powley, Coordinator, Our HRM Alliance, Ecology Action Centre).

2 Scouts Canada, written brief, p. 2.

3 See Parks Canada, [Parks Canada Attendance 2007–08 — 2011–12](#).

4 Scouts Canada, written brief, p. 2.

5 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Bennett).

It is the Committee's hope that this report's content is considered during the development of the National Conservation Plan.

Understanding the Term "Urban Conservation"

Before discussing some of the Committee's findings, it may be helpful to clarify what is meant by the term "urban conservation." There does not seem to be a consensus within the international community regarding the definition of this term. Groups such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Global Heritage Fund use the term in reference to protecting heritage buildings and cities.⁶ Others define "urban conservation" more broadly to include environmental factors as well as socio-physical and socio-cultural issues.⁷ Committee members asked witnesses how they define the term.⁸ Numerous responses were given.

One witness defined urban conservation as "protecting and managing the valuable ecological spaces and species in and around cities, as well as the ecosystem services that they provide."⁹ Similarly, another witness defined urban conservation as "all the interventions, programs and regulations used to limit human impact on greenspaces."¹⁰

One witness focussed his definition on urban biodiversity, stating that a broader interpretation of the term "would also include issues related to the rehabilitation of ecosystems that have deteriorated."¹¹

"I think considerations of balancing environment and sustainable development are probably going to be one of the foremost important questions of this century."

– Ms. Monica Andreeff, Executive Director, Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment

"Urban conservation must bring human development and nature into balance by basing itself on the support capacity of ecosystems. Urban conservation serves to curb the destruction of natural and agricultural environments which still exist but are under significant threat. An urban conservation approach provides for the continuity, accessibility and ecological functionality of the natural and agricultural network."

– Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval, written brief, p. 9

6 UNESCO, [Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions](#), November 10, 2011. See also Global Heritage Fund, [Spring Cleaning](#), April 2010.

7 For example, see Dr. Amira Elnokaly and Dr. Ahmed Elseragy, "[Sustainable Heritage Development: Learning from Urban Conservation of Heritage Projects in Non Western Contexts](#)," *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Rome, Italy, 2013, pp. 31–56.

8 See ENVI, "[Study on Urban Conservation Practices in Canada](#)," News release, October 3, 2012.

9 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter).

10 ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, November 28, 2012 (Ms. Andréanne Blais, Biologist, Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec).

11 ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, December 5, 2012 (Dr. Normand Brunet, Consultant and Researcher in Environmental Science, Institute of Environmental Sciences, Lecturer, Université du Québec à Montréal, As an Individual).

Some witnesses suggested points that should be considered when thinking about urban conservation, including “the protection or preservation of identified environmental reserves; restoration or rehabilitation of previously built greenspaces; development or re-establishment of community identities and a sense of place; and, education or promotion of ecosystems within the built environment.”¹²

Numerous witnesses emphasized accessibility when they discussed urban conservation. For example, one witness defined urban conservation as “making natural areas and ecosystem available and accessible to people in cities and towns while at the same time protecting the integrity and quality of these ecosystems.”¹³

Another aspect of urban conservation includes the concept of “interactive connectivity,” that is, in order to instill a sense of nature ethic within urban dwellers, natural spaces must be available for interaction and utility.¹⁴ One witness in particular warned of the danger of a “look-but-don’t touch philosophy toward outdoor areas [that has] left millions of people disconnected from the very land that’s been protected for them.”¹⁵ He testified:

[O]ur overzealous protection of some areas and telling people that they should look but not touch are creating a generation of people who are not as connected as they should be to the natural world. It's ironic that when we look at the long view, our protection schemes may actually be damaging the lands we've aimed to protect.¹⁶

The Committee recognizes that sometimes there are good reasons for restricting public access to certain green spaces, or restricting human activities in certain places for conservation purposes. However, on other occasions, broader conservation goals are better served by welcoming and encouraging human interaction with nature. The key is to find the right balance.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada ensure that the importance of Canadians having opportunities to interact with nature be reflected in its development of the National Conservation Plan.

12 Olds College, written brief, p. 4. The Collins Dictionary (on-line) defines “built environment” as consisting of “buildings and all other things that have been constructed by human beings”: Collins Dictionaries, [Built environment](#). UNESCO states that the “built environment refers to human-made (versus natural) resources and infrastructure designed to support human activity, such as buildings, roads, parks, and other amenities”: UNESCO, [Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions](#), November 10, 2011.

13 Mr. Kyle Lucyk, Living Prairie Museum, speaking points, p. 1.

14 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Mr. Adam Bienenstock, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds) and ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Mr. Mike Bingley, Outdoor Program Manager, Scouts Canada).

15 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

16 Ibid.

A final aspect of urban conservation is to consider where it occurs. There was consensus among Committee members and witnesses that urban conservation encompasses more than just parks in and around urban centres. It includes the trees that line city streets. It also includes green roofs and community gardens. As one witness explained, urban conservation “is actualized in all greenspaces, starting in the backyards, schoolyards, balconies, or planters and spreading out from there.”¹⁷

Considering “Protected Spaces”

There was consensus that legally protected parks and green spaces in urban areas are an important element of urban conservation; however, witnesses had different ideas as to the ultimate purpose of protecting green spaces. Some witnesses discussed the importance of protecting and connecting habitat for flora and fauna in order to maintain ecological functions and services.¹⁸ Other witnesses were of the view that green spaces in urban areas should be protected for human use and enjoyment.¹⁹ One witness reconciled these views when he discussed the importance of having different types of protected zones within an urban area.²⁰

Several witnesses expressed concern about development pressures within cities that may lead to encroachment on natural lands. According to some witnesses, an effective means of withstanding these pressures is through land-use planning, where important natural areas are identified and protected from the outset.²¹

One point that members of the Committee wish to stress is that parks in urban centres represent only one type of protected space. Significant ecological assets within cities and towns may not be inventoried, but their contributions to urban conservation should not be overlooked. The urban tree canopy comprises not just trees in parks, but trees anywhere in the urban environment: lining streets, in a mall parking lot and elsewhere.²² Backyard and community gardens are also significant.²³ In addition to natural areas, human-controlled green spaces are valuable. For example, the Committee heard testimony regarding the benefits of naturalizing a school yard to include grass, trees and

17 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Mr. Kenneth Beattie, Manager, Habitat Programs, Canadian Wildlife Federation).

18 See Conseil régional de l’environnement de Laval, written brief, p. 10.

19 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock) and ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

20 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Brunet).

21 For example, see ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Garand) and ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Mr. John Husk, Member, City Councillor, City of Drummondville, Conseil régional de l’environnement du Centre-du-Québec).

22 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Rosen).

23 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Ms. Dorothy Dobbie, Past Chair, Board of Directors, Tree Canada) and ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, December 3, 2012 (Mr. Michael Ricketts, Head Gardener, Bridgeland-Riverside Vacant Lots Garden).

hills.²⁴ In sum, when assessing ecological assets in urban areas, all types of natural and naturalized assets could be considered.

Why Urban Conservation is Important

In spite of the debate around the best definition of urban conservation and the appropriate priorities for protecting green spaces within cities, there was a general consensus among the witnesses and Committee members that urban conservation is important. The full extent of the importance became increasingly obvious as witness after witness testified about the physical and economic benefits of establishing and maintaining pockets of nature throughout our cities. When asked to comment on the significance of the Committee's decision to study this issue, witnesses were unanimous in praising this initiative. The comment of one witness was representative: "Wow. This is great news. This is wonderful news. Thank God this level of government is taking an interest in urban Canada."²⁵

"There is nothing like getting back to the earth and back to nature to put things in perspective."

– Ms. Dorothy Dobbie, Past Chair, Board of Directors, Tree Canada

Green spaces are places of refuge for people in the built environment. They encourage people to go outside, to walk instead of drive, and to interact with each other and the world around them. They build a sense of community while reducing stress levels and crime rates.²⁶ Trees in the urban environment clean the air we breathe. Wetlands filter the water we drink. Numerous witnesses testified about the benefits of urban green spaces for human health, and for children in particular, as well as the economic benefits stemming from the ecological services nature provides for free. In short, green spaces make cities more liveable.

The benefits of urban conservation for biodiversity were also explored during this study. While green spaces in cities do provide habitat for plants and animals, they also help foster a nature ethic in people, including children. The Committee heard that opportunities to experience and explore nature help children to appreciate and value the natural world, while at the same time giving them a sense of ownership of, and responsibility for, wild spaces. For example, one witness testified:

"[T]his is an important topic.... This is about making cities great places to live."

– Ms. Anne Charlton, Director, Parks, City of Calgary

The most pressing one is this: who are the next generation of urban conservationists? Where is their sense of ownership with the natural world? Where is their sense of Canadian identity going to come from? We have a tradition in Canada of being tied to the

24 ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Mr. Robert Savard, Representative, Green School Project, Municipal Councillor, City of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, As an individual) and ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

25 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Rosen).

26 See ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Ricketts); ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Moola); ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, October 29, 2012 (Ms. Lorrie Minshall, Director, Water Management Plan, Grand River Conservation Authority).

land, and we are losing that. An entire generation is losing it. We're not coming up on the cliff, we're on the edge of the cliff and about to fall off; we have to learn that we're either going to fly or we're going to fall, and what we do right now matters.²⁷

In short, giving people, and especially children, an opportunity to connect with nature can help foster a conservation ethic in Canadians, which can be enormously beneficial in maintaining Canada's wild spaces and biodiversity beyond city limits.

Connecting Urban Canadians with Nature and Conservation

Based on all the relevant evidence, witnesses unanimously recognized that there are many benefits to connecting urban Canadians with nature and conservation. A number of witnesses focussed specifically on the positive effects nature and conservation can have on children.²⁸ Other benefits — to the economy, human health and biodiversity — may be enjoyed by the Canadian population at large.

Benefits to Children

The Committee heard about the many benefits children gain from unstructured outdoor play in green spaces and in nature: aggression,²⁹ bullying, and vandalism³⁰ rates drop. At the same time, “attention spans are lengthened, and interest in the world around them — and not just the natural world — is increased.”³¹

One witness, who is a specialist in natural playgrounds, testified:

If you look at a standard playground or standard green space or even these paved spaces, the children engaging in physical activity are predominantly the A-type kids.^[32] About 40% of the kids are getting more than 80% of the physical activity levels. If you make this shift and they spend time in nature, all of a sudden it levels off, so the

“Active Healthy Kids Canada just last year designated nature as one of the main predictors of the health of our children. It is one of the simplest, easiest, cheapest ways to make a difference in the health of our children.”

— Mr. Adam Bienenstock, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds

27 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

28 ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Mr. Rodney Penner, City Naturalist, Naturalist Services, City of Winnipeg); ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, November 21, 2012 (Ms. Marlene Power, Director, Board of Directors, Forest School Canada, and Member, Child and Nature Alliance of Canada); ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Mr. Peter Kendall, Executive Director, Earth Rangers); ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

29 ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Savard).

30 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

31 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

32 Type A and Type B Personality Theory stems from research conducted in the 1950s by cardiologists Meyer Friedman and R.H. Rosenman. “They concluded that someone with a type A personality is more likely to be concerned with status and achievement. They are often workaholics, who may have issues with self-esteem and impatience. They're also more likely to be quick to anger”: Sarah Wilson, “How to understand people: Part 1: Understanding personality: Type A and B personalities,” *The Guardian*, March 7, 2009.

children you most want to learn about nurturing, those aggressive king-of-the-castle kids, are the ones who actually start to calm down, and the ones on the sidelines who aren't participating normally—the ones with high obesity rates, disabilities, cultural biases, social collaboration problems, phobias—are the ones whose activity levels exponentially increase. Even though the activities are the same in both, these natural spaces provide us with the opportunity to hit the ones we most want to engage.³³

“At Earth Rangers, we believe the best audience to start with is children. In a recent U.K. study, 24% of parents cited children as their key motivator on sustainability and concluded that children are more powerful in getting environmental ideas across than either politicians or the media.”

– Mr. Peter Kendall, Executive Director, Earth Rangers

Several witnesses also discussed the benefits of outdoor play in a natural setting as an effective way to address the growing problem of childhood obesity.³⁴ The Committee heard that, for North America, the average length of time 8- to 18-year-old kids spend in front of a screen each week is 52.5 hours.³⁵ Since that number represents the average, many kids actually spend substantially more time than that in front of a screen.

One witness noted that, while daily physical activity programs and organized sports have not eliminated obesity, outdoor programs and the unstructured outdoor play that they promote do help.³⁶ In a natural setting, children play longer and on an on-going basis. One witness quantified this finding for the Committee: children play for 19 to 22 minutes, on average, when sent to a typical post-and-platform playground. When left to explore a natural space, they will play for an average of one hour and four minutes.³⁷ This substantial increase in active playtime, on an on-going basis, makes the difference.

Unstructured outdoor playtime for kids is also related to a longer term benefit for society at large. A common theme in the testimony was the connection between an engagement with nature and a conservation ethic.³⁸ Kids who explore natural settings come to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility towards those green spaces.³⁹ As explained by one witness, a conservation ethic is “an essential component of

“[S]tudies show that children with ADD function better after being involved in activities in green settings. The greener a child’s play area is, the less severe his or her attention deficit disorder symptoms are.”

– Ms. Dorothy Dobbie, Past Chair, Board of Directors, Tree Canada

33 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

34 For example, see ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

35 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

36 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

37 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

38 ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Mr. Oliver Kent, President, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and Penner); ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Ms. Monica Andreeff, Executive Director, Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment); ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

39 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

our Canadian identity.”⁴⁰ Another witness expressed a concern, shared by others, that “future generations of Canadians may not be as connected to our natural world and as a result will fail to appreciate the immense value that these places provide to our collective health and well-being, and will not actively support their protection.”⁴¹

However, the ability for kids to connect with nature and benefit from outdoor play largely depends on there being suitable parks and natural areas close by. As explained by one witness, the average roam rate of children today is a fraction of what it was a generation ago. “Roam rate” refers to the distance from home over which children range unsupervised. A generation ago, the average roam rate was between 5 and 10 kilometres. Today, the average roam rate of an eight-year-old is 150 yards (137 metres).⁴² Having access to natural spaces could encourage unstructured play and foster a greater sense of nature ethic within children.

Yet, natural parks and wilderness areas are not the only places in which children can engage with nature. As discussed earlier, green backyards and schoolyards also qualify. One witness brought the concept of community gardens to the Committee’s attention as a great place for all people, children and seniors in particular, to get involved.⁴³

Economic Benefits

Another area of convergence in this study is related to the many and often substantial economic benefits of nature in the form of ecological services.

As summarized by one witness, natural and semi-natural ecosystems “contribute to air quality improvement, carbon capture, mitigation of urban hot spots, runoff stabilization, landscape improvement, and public health and wellness.”⁴⁴

These benefits are not gained only in relation to wilderness areas. The Committee also heard about how urban conservation initiatives may create huge economic benefits for communities. For example, urban trees conserve energy when planted strategically around a building, reduce the effects of the sun’s radiation and provide shade, cooling and wind protection. They transform a

“We often take for granted the astonishing array of natural benefits that green space and farmland provide for all of us.”

– Dr. Faisal Moola, Director General, Ontario and the North, David Suzuki Foundation

“Natural environments are important, be they wetlands that filter the water like kidneys or trees that catch the atmospheric dust and CO₂. They work for us around the clock, 365 days a year without asking for anything in return.”

– Mr. Guy Garand, Managing Director, Conseil régional de l’environnement de Laval

40 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

41 Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, written brief, p. 3.

42 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

43 ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Ricketts).

44 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Brunet).

number of contaminants in the soil, and retain 2% to 7% of water that would otherwise run into sewers.⁴⁵

These benefits are not simply theoretic. One witness cited published scientific evidence showing that “the ecological benefits we get from urban nature are extremely valuable in monetary terms and in some cases truly priceless.”⁴⁶

Numerous witnesses quantified these benefits. For example, witnesses testified that:

- A single tree can provide \$161,000 in environmental benefits;⁴⁷
- In 2011, Oakville valued the benefits of its urban forests at \$2.1 million annually, while Peel Region valued theirs at \$22.7 million annually;⁴⁸
- It is estimated that the proposed Montreal greenbelt will provide over \$4 billion in services per year;⁴⁹ and
- A 2012 study found that the Toronto “Greenbelt has an economic impact of over \$9 billion per year province-wide, and supports 161,000 jobs.”⁵⁰

In contrast, the Committee also heard testimony about the devastating impact the emerald ash borer is having on urban canopies. For example, the City of Brantford, Ontario expects to lose 90,000 trees to this invasive pest, which will diminish its canopy between 1.5% to 2%. The City has a 15-year strategic plan — including treatment, taking trees down and replanting — to try to work through the problem, the cost of which is expected to be “huge,” and Brantford is not the only area affected by the emerald ash borer.⁵¹

45 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Dobbie).

46 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Moola).

47 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Mr. Mark Cullen, Chair, Trees For Life, Urban Tree Coalition).

48 ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Ms. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, Vice-Chair, Standing Committee on Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development, Councillor, City of Brantford, Federation of Canadian Municipalities).

49 ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Ms. Marie-Christine Bellemare, Project Officer, Conseil régional de l’environnement de Laval).

50 Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, written brief, p. 1.

51 ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Ceschi-Smith).

Another quantifiable economic benefit of urban conservation initiatives that a number of witnesses raised is increased property values.⁵² People appreciate living close to beautiful, natural spaces. One witness discussed the value of planning developments that integrate and focus on natural features, such as a river, rather than trying to “tuck it away behind someone’s backyard.” This, he explained, could bring value to a neighbourhood, “if properly planned overall.”⁵³

Hammarby, Sweden is the most environmentally sustainable community in the world and the highest valued real estate in that country because people are attracted to it.

– Mr. Jim Tovey, Councillor, Ward 1, City of Mississauga, As an Individual

Several witnesses quantified the potential premium for properties that are close to nature. Property values surrounding natural parks might be expected to increase by 20%, and this increase could be more in worse neighbourhoods.⁵⁴ One witness suggested that trees increase property values by 37%.⁵⁵ Such property increases may benefit taxing municipalities as well as property owners.

“[Urban forests] keep neighbourhoods cool, improve air quality, provide wildlife habitat, remove CO₂ from the atmosphere, retain stormwater runoff, and prevent erosion. Urban forests also add esthetic, recreational, and economic value to communities, all of which enhance the quality of life.”

– Ms. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, Vice-Chair, Standing Committee on Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development, Councillor, City of Brantford, Federation of Canadian Municipalities

A final comment on the economic benefits of the urban canopy related to its connection with tourism: one witness noted that while trees help make a city beautiful and liveable for its residents, they also play a role in attracting tourists to visit a city.⁵⁶

Benefits for Human Health

A number of witnesses discussed the health benefits stemming from urban conservation. In particular, they focussed on the important role that trees play for human health by absorbing air pollutants such as CO₂, volatile organic compounds and toxins,⁵⁷ and returning clean oxygen and moisture to the air.⁵⁸ One witness described a study from

52 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock); ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Dobbie and Cullen).

53 ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mr. Ken Dion, Senior Project Manager, Watershed Management Division, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority).

54 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

55 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Dobbie).

56 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Cullen).

57 ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Dr. François Reeves, Interventional Cardiologist, Faculty of Medicine, Associate Professor of Medicine, Université de Montréal, As an Individual).

58 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Dobbie).

Manitoba showing that trees were absorbing ground pollutants, such as road salt, as well.⁵⁹

The Committee heard some notable evidence from a cardiologist on the significant health benefits of a green and clean environment. He explained that decreasing airborne nano-aggressors like carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, fine particles, ultrafine particles and volatile organic compounds can lead to a reduction in cardiovascular diseases.⁶⁰

Another witness cited a compilation of over 200 studies showing “quantifiable evidence that cancer, diabetes, lung disease, ADHD in children, are all reduced, and in some cases minimized, when people live in the environment of a healthy urban tree canopy.”⁶¹

Benefits for Biodiversity

Welcoming nature into cities doesn’t only benefit people; it may also improve biodiversity.⁶² One witness suggested: “preservation, rehabilitation and replication of ecosystems with attributes of indigenous characteristics to local/regional environments can contribute to more robust diversification of plants, animals and insects and minimizing introduced species and monocultures.”⁶³

As indicated by another witness, urban conservation can also “help Canada deliver on our international commitments under the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity*, in particular the 2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.”⁶⁴

The Goals of Connecting Urban Canadians with Nature and Conservation

As one of the seven questions used to define its study, the Committee asked witnesses what could be the goals of connecting urban Canadians with conservation. One witness summarized possible goals as follows:

“[[I]f you live in a green area rather than in a mineralized, polluted area, you cut in half the difference in mortality that exists between the rich and the poor.”
– Dr. François Reeves, Interventional Cardiologist, Faculty of Medicine, Associate Professor of Medicine, Université de Montréal, As an Individual

“Trees are incredibly important to the environmental health of our communities.”
– Ms. Dorothy Dobbie, Past Chair, Board of Directors, Tree Canada

“Stewardship and engagement are the key.”
– Mr. Adam Bienenstock, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds

59 Ibid.
60 ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Reeves).
61 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Cullen).
62 Dr. Normand Brunet, written brief, p. 5.
63 Olds College, written brief, p. 8.
64 Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, written brief, p. 1.

[T]o educate, facilitate, mentor, and demonstrate to Canadians how they can make a positive impact for themselves and for future generations through conservation efforts; to instill and develop the notion that every conservation effort counts, and that collectively individuals will recognize and realize positive change in their very own Canadian communities; to inspire Canadians to make healthy decisions regarding their leisure, family, and working time through experiential learning with their own communities on private and/or on public lands; to showcase Canadian urban conservation initiatives as models for others through sharing positive working solutions, our stewardship, and collaborative efforts at all levels of government; and to allow Canadians the opportunity to enjoy, appreciate, and learn about nature within their immediate community through sound, sustainable urban planning that includes rich open areas and greenspace.⁶⁵

The goals of connecting urban Canadians with conservation “should be a healthier and happier population as well as a robust environment”⁶⁶ by promoting access to parks and green spaces.

“Can you imagine your community without any trees? Trees define your community. They make our lives as Canadians that much more liveable.”

– Mr. Michael Rosen, President, Tree Canada

“It’s a fact that vehicular traffic on a well-treed street, a mature street, slows down. We also know that pedestrian traffic picks up. We know that kids come out of the houses and start playing out of doors – God forbid, maybe a little ball hockey.”

– Mr. Mark Cullen, Chair, Trees for Life, Urban Tree Coalition

Rouge National Urban Park: A Step in the Right Direction

As part of its urban conservation study, the Committee dedicated time to hear specifically about the status of the proposed Rouge National Urban Park. The current Rouge Park is a 40 km² area in the Rouge Valley of the eastern Greater Toronto Area made up of both public and private lands.⁶⁷ In its 2011 Speech from the Throne, the government announced that it would work with other stakeholders towards establishing Canada’s first urban national park in the Rouge Valley.⁶⁸

As explained by a representative from Parks Canada, Rouge Park owes its current existence “to the foresight, dedication, and engagement of a diversity of local visionaries and stewards who, for over more than 30 years, have supported the park.”⁶⁹ It has a rich cultural history and is home to two historic sites. Rouge Park is also one of the most biologically diverse areas in all of Canada. More than 23 federally designated species at risk, 800 plants, and 55 fish species may be found in the park.⁷⁰

65 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Beattie).

66 Ecology Action Centre, written brief, p. 4.

67 Rouge Park, [About Us](#).

68 [Speech from the Throne](#), Ottawa, June 3, 2011.

69 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Mr. Andrew Campbell, Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, Parks Canada).

70 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Mr. Jim Robb, General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed).

By creating the Rouge National Urban Park, the Government of Canada is helping to protect natural capital that provides an estimated \$12 million annually in critical ecological benefits to communities in the region.⁷¹ Rouge Park is within a one-hour drive of seven million people, and is accessible by public transit.⁷² With increasing numbers of Canadians living in urbanized communities, this accessibility is an important feature of the proposed national park.⁷³

The Role of Agriculture in Rouge Park

The Committee heard about the important role of agriculture in the park. Lands within the park's proposed study area have been used for agricultural purposes for more than 200 years.⁷⁴ A representative from the David Suzuki Foundation explained that approximately 60% of the park land is used for agriculture, which is a "key component to both the heritage and the future of the new national park."⁷⁵ For that reason, the proposed concept for the park includes "the integration and promotion of sustainable agriculture."⁷⁶

Witnesses from the David Suzuki Foundation and the Friends of the Rouge Watershed highlighted the opportunity for those who farm in Rouge Park to move towards a more sustainable model of production.⁷⁷ Under such a model, farmers could produce local food for one of Canada's largest urban areas, while also protecting and restoring biodiversity.⁷⁸

Public Consultations and Progress to Date

Parks Canada Agency has consulted the public extensively on establishing Rouge Park as a national urban park. A representative from that agency explained that, since the summer of 2011, they have involved over a hundred communities and other organizations, including First Nations and youth, in meetings and workshops that culminated in the

"I can confirm that the overall objectives presented in the Rouge national urban park concept resonated with urban residents and Canadians throughout our nation. They want this place to be protected and accessible. They are passionate about conservation and restoration. They want to connect with nature. They want to learn about the cultural heritage character of the park and they are supportive of a vibrant farming community."

– Mr. Andrew Campbell, Vice-President,
External Relations and Visitor
Experience, Parks Canada

71 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Moola).
72 Rouge Park. [A National Urban Park?](#)
73 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Moola).
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Campbell).
77 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Moola and Robb).
78 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Moola).

development of nine principles to guide the development of the Rouge National Urban Park concept.⁷⁹

Consultations by Parks Canada also included an information piece dropped off to 26,000 residents in and around the park area, over 2,500 persons filling out an online survey, 4,600 persons attending events, 120 different community consultations, and input from tens of thousands of people.⁸⁰

Parks Canada consulted with the public on this concept in the summer and fall of 2012 and is currently reviewing the input received. Overall, the Parks Canada representative noted that the objectives of the park “resonated with urban residents and Canadians throughout our nation.”⁸¹

Given its importance, Parks Canada also consulted stakeholders on the issue of accessibility to the park. The agency had discussions with Metrolinx (a provincial transportation agency) about bringing different types of public transit to the park. Waterfront Regeneration Trust and Trans Canada Trail were also consulted about connecting existing trails across the park.⁸²

Regarding progress made in establishing the park, officials from Parks Canada noted that the land assembly process involves a lot of “give-and-take,” but that the agency has focussed on land areas with fewer encumbrances in order to progress as quickly as possible towards the park’s creation. Over the coming months, Parks Canada will be working with public landholders to reach an agreement on park boundaries and the assembly of lands that will be transferred to the agency. “Parks Canada will then be in a position to put forward a recommendation to government on a legislative process. A strategic plan will be developed and will be presented to Canadians for input.”⁸³

Witness Suggestions

Witnesses and Committee members alike support the establishment of Rouge Park as Canada’s first national urban park. Parks such as the Rouge play an important role in urban conservation: they provide opportunities for people to connect with nature, while also providing ecological benefits by protecting natural spaces. We commend the stakeholders who have worked tirelessly and passionately to protect this area and make it accessible for residents to enjoy. Parks Canada is now tasked with considering and balancing multiple interests and priorities as it develops the plan for this first-ever national urban park. Several witnesses made various suggestions to the Committee about this plan, including about the importance of conservation in this “ecological engine of the

79 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Campbell).

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

region.”⁸⁴ Testimony given before the Committee regarding the planning for Rouge Park may be useful to Parks Canada as it continues to develop the final park plan.

Best Practices: We All Have a Role to Play

Over the course of this study, witnesses explained some of the challenges in urban conservation and discussed best practices for the same. While the best practices that witnesses chose to discuss with the Committee are diverse, two themes that emerged were the importance of partnerships and holistic thinking for overcoming challenges and advancing urban conservation.

Challenges and Best Practices

One of the seven questions the Committee asked witnesses was about challenges and best practices in urban conservation.⁸⁵

Witnesses responded that some of the challenges include the non-mandatory nature of urban conservation,⁸⁶ development pressures,⁸⁷ and a lack of funding.⁸⁸ In other words, there is a need to properly appreciate the benefits of urban conservation by integrating into economic models the true value of goods and services rendered by natural ecosystems.⁸⁹

Another challenge identified by witnesses is the increasing disconnect between urban Canadians and the natural environment. One witness put it this way: “The most pressing one is this: who are the next generation of urban conservationists? Where is their sense of ownership with the natural world? Where is their sense of Canadian identity going to come from?”⁹⁰

Other challenges include the need to collaborate with municipalities due to federal jurisdictional limits, and the need for municipal plans which protect sensitive areas in a manner that can be monitored.⁹¹

Further, one witness commented on the challenge of balancing recreational use and visitor experience with protecting wilderness and wildlife, in the face of those more concerned about exclusion rather than inclusion.⁹² A “look but don’t touch” mentality was

84 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Moola). Also see ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Robb).

85 See ENVI, “[Study on Urban Conservation Practices in Canada](#),” News release, October 3, 2012.

86 Olds College, written brief, p. 6.

87 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Brunet) and Conseil régional de l’environnement du Centre-du-Québec, written brief, p. 3.

88 Olds College, written brief, p. 6.

89 Conseil régional de l’environnement de Laval, written brief, p. 9.

90 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

91 Ibid. and ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Butler).

92 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Andreeff).

exemplified by the experience of one witness, who, while leading a group of children in a national park, was prohibited from rolling back a rock to see what was underneath.⁹³

At the other end of the continuum, the Committee heard that along with passive enjoyment can come over-use, safety hazards, and vandalism. Due to their generally small size and disturbance pressures, maintenance, management, and restoration requirements are often associated with ensuring protected areas do not become overwhelmed by other disturbance factors. The cost of maintenance can be the biggest barrier to public access.⁹⁴

The best practices described by witnesses were wide-ranging and informative, yet still provide only a small sample of the many practices and initiatives being undertaken across the country.

The Committee heard that in 2010 Environment Canada, in partnership with ICLEI Canada (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives),⁹⁵ published the Cities and Biodiversity Case Studies Series, showcasing best practices in urban biodiversity management and protection.⁹⁶

The Committee also heard that the Government of Canada is supporting a federal-provincial-territorial working group with a focus on integrating biodiversity into municipal plans and strategies.⁹⁷

Witnesses described a number of existing Government of Canada programs which encourage best practices in urban conservation. These include the Habitat Stewardship Program (with Montréal's Rivière à l'Orme Ecoforest Corridor as an example) and the Natural Areas Conservation Program with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ducks Unlimited. Environment Canada also has a variety of other programs and partnerships that support urban conservation including the EcoAction Community Funding Program, the Ecological Gifts Program, and BioKits developed by the Biosphere

“Examples of best practices:

- Constructed wetlands, bioswales and rain gardens for storm water management;
- Use of native plant materials and local sourced materials for green space implementation;
- Development of urban agriculture through community gardens, roof top gardens and greenhouses;
- Green roof development [...]; and
- Water re-use (rain water capture/use, grey water recycling).”

– Olds College, written brief, p. 6.

93 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

94 ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Minshall and Penner).

95 “ICLEI was founded in 1990 as the ‘International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives’. ... In 2003, the ‘International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives’ became ‘ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability’ with a broader mandate to address all sustainability issues”: ICLEI Canada, [About ICLEI](#).

96 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter).

97 Ibid.

to encourage Canadians to go outdoors and discover biodiversity in their neighbourhoods, parks, and urban spaces.⁹⁸

Another witness described in glowing terms the assistance of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in saving dozens of hectares of wetlands in eastern and western Laval.⁹⁹

Witnesses described design features being used to enhance urban conservation. For example, in Toronto, a new technology known as “Silva Cells” is being used when trees are planted in paved areas. Silva cells “can support sidewalks and infrastructure but allow for soil so that tree roots can exist in the soil beneath the sidewalks.”¹⁰⁰ In the City of Surrey, creeks are left open to provide for natural drainage.¹⁰¹ In Halifax, the Ecology Action Centre is recommending greenbelting as a best practice.¹⁰²

A number of witnesses discussed the importance of providing natural playgrounds and parks for children and adults alike.¹⁰³ Committee members were interested to hear about a community-led initiative in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield that involved transforming an asphalt schoolyard into a green space for children to play.¹⁰⁴ In Winnipeg, the Living Prairie Museum offers one of the last remaining examples of a tall grass prairie ecosystem, which is accessible to all by public transit.¹⁰⁵

Witnesses also mentioned specific programs designed to help connect people with nature and conservation. For example, the Canadian Wildlife Federation runs various educational and participatory programs that “link Canadians with the Arctic and our oceans, forests, lakes, and rivers, and connect millions of students to practical conservation initiatives.”¹⁰⁶ In Winnipeg, the city’s Bridging the Gap program “provides opportunities for inner-city kids to experience a hike in a natural area or do some gardening at their school.”¹⁰⁷ Across the entire country, organizations such as Scouts Canada and Earth Rangers help children connect with nature and get involved in conservation.¹⁰⁸

Remediation of brownfields was a topic that came up several times in testimony during this study. In particular, the Committee heard about a large-scale project in

98 Ibid.

99 ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Garand).

100 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Rosen).

101 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Ms. Carrie Baron, Manager, Drainage and Environment, Engineering Department, City of Surrey).

102 Ecology Action Centre, written brief, p. 4.

103 For example, see ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

104 ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Savard).

105 Mr. Kyle Lucyk, Living Prairie Museum, speaking points, p. 1.

106 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Beattie).

107 ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Penner).

108 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley) and ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Kendall).

Mississauga to transform waterfront brownfields into “the world’s most environmentally sustainable community,” featuring cultural and heritage destinations as well as reinstated wetlands, fish spawning beds, and rehabilitated creeks.¹⁰⁹

Finally, several witnesses suggested that land use planning is a best practice in urban conservation.¹¹⁰ In Calgary, the city has established a wetland conservation plan that allows for compensation and mitigation for loss of wetlands. A representative testified that this plan has been a “tremendously valuable tool” for “rais[ing] the value and the importance of wetlands within the context of decision-making in the city,” as well as providing “the tools to plan and mitigate and ultimately conserve wetlands in a more sustainable landscape.”¹¹¹

The Committee noted that many on-the-ground conservation groups have extensive knowledge that could be applied in urban environments as well as rural settings.

The Importance of Partnerships and Holistic Thinking

As Committee members heard about the many and varied urban conservation programs and initiatives already taking place across Canada, two common factors stood out as preconditions to successful urban conservation: working in partnerships and thinking holistically.

Partnerships are important for several reasons. All levels of government have an interest in urban conservation. While the federal and provincial roles are significant, the Committee respects the unique position of cities and local authorities “to develop biodiversity solutions tailored to local needs and priorities.”¹¹²

For example, the City of Calgary consulted extensively with its residents in 2005 to create imagineCalgary, a plan for long-range urban sustainability. The City has since used the plan to shape its policies and direction, including its municipal development plan, which now incorporates concepts of conservation, biodiversity, and green infrastructure.¹¹³

The Town of Canmore, Alberta has also implemented policies that reflect the values and vision of its residents. This community, which borders Banff National Park, has “established an urban growth boundary which identifies areas of ecological importance.”¹¹⁴

Local needs and priorities are best met through collaborative regional planning and management. A good example is found in the Grand River watershed, which is located immediately to the west of the Greater Toronto Area. In that watershed, the provincially

109 ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mr. Jim Tovey, Councillor, Ward 1, City of Mississauga, As an Individual).

110 See ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Garand) and Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, written brief, p. 9.

111 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Mr. Chris Manderson, Natural Area Management Lead, Parks, City of Calgary).

112 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter).

113 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Manderson).

114 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Andreeff).

constituted Grand River Conservation Authority “and its many partners — the municipalities, the provincial and federal agencies, and others — have adopted an integrated, watershed-wide approach to managing environmental assets.”¹¹⁵ As a result, the cities and towns along the Grand “now see the river system as a community and economic asset to be valued and integrated into their long-range development plans.”¹¹⁶

Other examples of collaborative management of local issues that were discussed during the study include Calgary’s management of invasive species, which involves all three levels of government,¹¹⁷ as well as Surrey’s stream classification system, which was developed in collaboration with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Environment Canada.¹¹⁸

However, government collaboration is only part of the solution. Private actors, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individuals and the business community, are also important partners for urban conservation initiatives. They may provide funding, materials, expertise, and labour.

An example of private funding in support of urban conservation that was raised during testimony is the Evergreen Brick Works, a 40-acre natural heritage park near the centre of Toronto. Although the park was created by the City of Toronto and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, initial funding for this project was donated privately by David and Robin Young, which was pivotal to subsequently securing provincial and federal funding.¹¹⁹

A second example is the green school project in the City of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Quebec. In this instance, institutions, businesses, and community organizations partnered with teachers and students to provide funding, time and labour to transform an asphalt schoolyard into a naturalized, green area for students and the community at large.¹²⁰

“It’s often said that, when we work together, we can accomplish great things. This project is a true community success.”

– Mr. Robert Savard,
Representative, Green School
Project, Municipal Councillor, City
of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, As an
Individual

One witness explained the importance of a community-building process. He testified that simply building green spaces only goes part way to reaching urban conservation goals:

115 ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Minshall).

116 Ibid.

117 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Manderson).

118 ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Baron).

119 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Ms. Andrea Gabor, President, Canadian Institute of Planners).

120 ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Savard).

The rest of the points come from how you animate the space, how you consult with them so they know it is theirs, how they make their decisions, and then how they program the space afterwards. This is why we work with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, ParticipAction, Parks Canada, Right to Play, and Scouts Canada. It's because they all provide programming. We need to animate these spaces once we're done. It's not enough just to build it...¹²¹

In some cases, partners may support conservation objectives by adapting their way of doing business. For example, the Cornerstone Standard Council, an industry-financed, non-profit organization made up of aggregate producers and NGOs, is “creating and promoting a voluntary certification program for socially and environmentally responsible aggregate extraction in Ontario.”¹²² Similarly, the *Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement* is a collaboration between NGOs and industry with the goal of promoting the highest environmental standards of forest management and conservation.¹²³

“Each one of these groups on their own could not be successful in that space, but if all of us collaborate and layer it properly, we can create a complete social change there.”

– Mr. Adam Bienenstock, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds

Youth organizations, such as Scouts Canada and Earth Rangers, are also important conservation partners. Scouts Canada has partnered with Parks Canada’s Palisades Stewardship Education Centre to replicate Scout camp programs across the country.¹²⁴ Earth Rangers has numerous corporate funding partners in connection with its Bring Back the Wild conservation program.¹²⁵

Finally, the significant contribution to conservation made by volunteers should not be overlooked. Volunteers across the country give their time, labour and expertise, amplifying the impact of conservation initiatives. For example, volunteer programs in Banff and Jasper national parks are introducing “hundreds of Canadians and international visitors to local conservation projects, wildlife monitoring, and assorted research programs every summer.”¹²⁶

The importance of working in partnerships for advancing urban conservation objectives is clear. As mentioned earlier, the second crucial factor is holistic thinking. When considering a proposed development or other course of action related to urban conservation, the benefits and drawbacks related to all components of human well-being — economic, environmental, and social (including human health) — must be taken into account to reach the optimal decision. Proposed urban conservation initiatives that may at first seem unfeasible due to lack of funding or development pressures,

121 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock).

122 ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Kendall).

123 Ibid.

124 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley).

125 ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Kendall).

126 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Andreeff).

for example, may ultimately prevail if the full range of potential benefits are considered holistically.

Several examples of such holistic thinking were raised in testimony. For example, in the Province of Quebec, a joint program between health and environment sectors has been “carrying out a major greening initiative in hospitals, health centres, residential and long-term care centres and local community services centres.”¹²⁷ In Halifax, an alliance of “very different groups — business groups, environmental groups, health groups —” all support greenbelting, but for various reasons.¹²⁸

“I believe it is important to have scientists from both [the health and environmental] fields working together.”

– Dr. François Reeves,
Interventional Cardiologist,
Faculty of Medicine, Associate
Professor of Medicine, Université
de Montréal, As an Individual

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that, under the National Conservation Plan, Environment Canada promote a holistic approach to urban conservation that involves strong partnerships between all levels of government and recognizes initiatives that involve private, public and not-for-profit entities as a best practice.

Improving the Environment Where Canadians Live: A Role for the Federal Government

Since an estimated 80% of Canadians live in cities, every level of government has an interest in enhanced urban conservation. As summarized by a federal government representative:

Cities and local authorities are uniquely positioned to develop biodiversity solutions tailored to local needs and priorities. ... Federal, provincial, and territorial governments can contribute to local efforts in a variety of ways. Their role may include setting national goals and targets, providing scientific and technical support, education and outreach, stewardship funding, building dialogues and partnerships, and developing place-based eco-regional approaches. They can also support local action by sharing knowledge and information.¹²⁹

Various witnesses expanded upon, and added to, these possible roles for the federal government. Committee members have considered all the testimony and are able to make some recommendations to the federal government on the most appropriate role for it to play in supporting and promoting urban conservation.

127 ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Reeves).

128 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Butler).

129 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter).

To date, the federal government has been involved in various initiatives related to urban conservation. Creating Rouge National Urban Park and providing support under the EcoAction Community Funding Program for projects that have measurable, positive impacts on the environment are but two examples.

Federal Leadership

While witnesses noted that many urban conservation activities fall within the scope of municipal and provincial governmental mandates, there are opportunities for the federal government to partner with different levels of government in the development of national best practices to encourage urban conservation. There is a particular opportunity to do so via the development of the National Conservation Plan. Numerous witnesses suggested that the federal government should play a role in urban conservation by setting national goals and targets, while being respectful of jurisdiction, or by creating a national vision.¹³⁰

“Create the vision and expectations for urban conservation and connecting urban Canadians with natural spaces, recognizing that the what and how will be specific to the varying local situations across the country.”

– Ms. Lorrie Minshall, Director,
Water Management Plan, Grand
River Conservation Authority

One witness, who noted that Canada is the only G8 country without a national urban forest presence or program, suggested that the federal government start a dialogue on a national urban forest strategy.¹³¹ He also expressed concern that federal researchers and programs are not focussed on tree issues in urban areas. He proposed that the Canadian Forest Service allocate one position in each of their forestry centres to work on urban forest issues.

Another witness commented that the federal government used to have a conservation commission. He suggested that it might be time once again to establish a commission of this nature.¹³²

Given that the Committee heard a significant amount of testimony regarding the importance of urban conservation practices to the country, the Committee agrees that there are opportunities for the promotion and facilitation of urban conservation activities within the federal government’s jurisdiction. These include practices which would inspire all levels of government, organizations, and Canadians to take action within their communities in support of urban conservation.

130 See ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter); ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock); ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Minshall); ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Ricketts); Conseil régional de l’environnement de Laval, written brief, p. 10.

131 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Rosen).

132 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Brunet).

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada include urban conservation, including jurisdictionally appropriate benchmarks, as an important component of the National Conservation Plan.

To be a credible leader in urban conservation, the federal government should ensure that it manages its own lands being cognizant of urban conservation principles.¹³³ As one witness noted, setting an example on federal property would be an easy start.¹³⁴

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada further promote and support responsible stewardship of federal lands and facilities that are located in urban areas.

Knowledge Development and Sharing

Another aspect of the federal role in urban conservation is knowledge development and sharing. Numerous witnesses commented on the usefulness of the technical or scientific knowledge and data the government already develops or collects and makes publicly available.¹³⁵ For example, one witness cited EQUilibrium, a national sustainable housing demonstration initiative led by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as “an example of where the federal government can leverage the power of its crown corporations, the power of its crown agencies, and the research and innovation wings at its disposal to drive innovation, to drive pilot projects, and to drive new and creative thinking towards how we’re going to handle and deal with some of these challenges.”¹³⁶

The federal government is just one of many important sources of information and knowledge relevant to urban conservation. Many witnesses saw an additional role for the federal government in facilitating the sharing of such knowledge, including “best practices” and other information,¹³⁷ as well as fostering dialogue or partnerships between

133 See ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Kendall).

134 ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Beattie).

135 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter); ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Mr. David Wise, Chair, Policy Advisory Committee, Canadian Institute of Planners); ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Minshall); ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Ceschi-Smith); ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Mr. Don Maciver, Director of Planning, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority); ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Reeves); ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Brunet); ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Bennett).

136 ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Wise).

137 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter); ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Wise); ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Manderson); ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Dobbie); ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Minshall); ENVI (October 31, 2012) (Baron); ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Savard); Conseil régional de l’environnement du Centre-du-Québec, written brief, p. 8.

stakeholders and different levels of government.¹³⁸ The Committee agrees that this is an important role that is best taken up at the national level.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada explore how to facilitate sharing knowledge, including best practices and information relevant to urban conservation, among Canadian stakeholders.

Funding and Other Financial Incentives

Many witnesses noted that the federal government plays a role in the area of funding, be it via tax credits or other financial incentives to support or promote urban conservation.¹³⁹ Witnesses also noted the utility brought to the cause by local interests playing a role in funding, be it land owners, industry, other levels of government, or philanthropy.¹⁴⁰

A number of witnesses made practical, specific suggestions regarding how to better allocate federal funding that is already committed. Groups noted that the administrative burden of certain funding programs does not adequately recognize that many urban conservation initiatives are largely run by volunteers, and that organizations that have an established track record of application success and compliance with granting terms and reporting are often placed in the same basket as new organizations.

An example of this is Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program. Witnesses suggested changes that would include allowing municipalities to apply for funding in connection with their urban conservation initiatives.¹⁴¹ One witness suggested that EcoAction funding should be available to organizations that support municipalities in the production of a conservation plan for natural environments.¹⁴²

138 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter); ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Manderson, Rosen and Cullen); ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Minshall); ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Ceschi-Smith); ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Kendall); Scouts Canada, written brief, p. 5.

139 ENVI (October 17, 2012) (Poter); ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Bienenstock and Wise); ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Andreeff and Cullen); ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Ceschi-Smith and Garand); ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Savard); ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Reeves); ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Bingley and Beattie); Mr. Kyle Lucyk, Living Prairie Museum, speaking points, p. 3; Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec, written brief, p. 7; Mr. Kenneth Bennett, Former Environmental Manager, Environmental Planning and Protection, City of Surrey, written brief, p. 5–6; Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval, written brief, p. 10; Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, written brief, p. 10.

140 For example, see ENVI (October 22, 2012) (Gabor) and ENVI (November 28, 2012) (Savard).

141 See ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Penner) and Mr. Kyle Lucyk, Living Prairie Museum, speaking points, p. 2.

142 Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec, written brief, p. 7.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada prioritize the principles of reducing administrative burden on project applicants, understanding that local groups are often the best placed service providers in promoting the use of leveraged funds and managing funding related to community-based conservation funding programs.

A second area of discussion with some practical suggestions about how to stretch existing federal dollars related to infrastructure. Several witnesses implied that currently, federal departments are operating in silos when they grant funding: some programs fund environmental initiatives, while other programs fund infrastructure needs. They proposed that conservation considerations be integrated into infrastructure grant programs.¹⁴³

For example, several witnesses suggested that federal infrastructure funding programs could be made available for green infrastructure projects as well as traditional grey infrastructure projects, and for projects that integrate the two.¹⁴⁴ One witness recommended specifically that ecosystem management be a part of existing infrastructure grant programs.¹⁴⁵

Representatives from Infrastructure Canada who subsequently appeared before the Committee testified that the terms and conditions of existing infrastructure funding programs are already flexible, and consequently that there is already scope for municipalities and others to access federal funding for ecological infrastructure projects. As an example, a representative mentioned that the Building Canada Fund has supported projects including engineered wetlands.¹⁴⁶

Committee members appreciate the important role municipal, provincial and territorial partners play, as owners of the vast majority of Canada's public infrastructure, in setting priorities and sharing costs. From the federal perspective, setting the eligibility parameters for partners to access federal funding programs is also critical. Based on testimony heard during this study, Committee members perceive a possible need for federal infrastructure funding programs to include project categories directed specifically at establishing and maintaining critical urban ecological infrastructure, such as the urban tree canopy and constructed wetlands. A dialogue with provincial, territorial and municipal partners, including interested conservation organizations, could help identify possible gaps in current federal funding programs, and determine appropriate funding levels that might address any such gaps.

143 Ibid., p. 8., ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Manderson) and ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Brunet).

144 For example, see ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Minshall).

145 ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Manderson).

146 ENVI, [Evidence](#), 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 7, 2012 (Ms. Natasha Rascanin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Program Operations Branch, Infrastructure Canada).

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that Infrastructure Canada initiate a dialogue with municipal, provincial and territorial partners regarding the possibility of including urban ecological infrastructure as a category under existing or future federal infrastructure funding programs.

Conclusion

As Canadian society is becoming increasingly urbanized, the importance of green spaces in urban centres is also increasing; for many people, these areas represent their best or only opportunity to connect with nature and conservation. The benefits of such connections — for children, the economy, human health, and biodiversity — are substantial.

To advance the objectives of urban conservation, the federal government has an important role to play in providing leadership, developing and sharing knowledge, providing funding, and recommending conservation and management priorities. However, the federal government is just one of the many entities who, through partnerships and holistic thinking, can best advance urban conservation by working together. We all have a role to play.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada ensure that the importance of Canadians having opportunities to interact with nature be reflected in its development of the National Conservation Plan..... 3

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that, under the National Conservation Plan, Environment Canada promote a holistic approach to urban conservation that involves strong partnerships between all levels of government and recognizes initiatives that involve private, public and not-for-profit entities as a best practice. 21

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada include urban conservation, including jurisdictionally appropriate benchmarks, as an important component of the National Conservation Plan. 23

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada further promote and support responsible stewardship of federal lands and facilities that are located in urban areas. 23

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada explore how to facilitate sharing knowledge, including best practices and information relevant to urban conservation, among Canadian stakeholders. 24

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that Environment Canada prioritize the principles of reducing administrative burden on project applicants, understanding that local groups are often the best placed service providers in promoting the use of leveraged funds and managing funding related to community-based conservation funding programs..... 25

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that Infrastructure Canada initiate a dialogue with municipal, provincial and territorial partners regarding the possibility of including urban ecological infrastructure as a category under existing or future federal infrastructure funding programs..... 26

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Department of the Environment Virginia Poter, Director General Canadian Wildlife Service</p> <p>Parks Canada Andrew Campbell, Vice-President External Relations and Visitor Experience</p>	2012/10/17	46
<p>Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds Adam Bienenstock, Founder and Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Canadian Institute of Planners Andrea Gabor, President David Wise, Chair Policy Advisory Committee</p> <p>Ecology Action Centre Jennifer Powley, Coordinator Our HRM Alliance Mark Butler, Policy Director</p>	2012/10/22	47
<p>Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment Monica Andreeff, Executive Director</p> <p>City of Calgary Anne Charlton, Director Parks Chris Manderson, Natural Area Management Lead Parks</p> <p>Tree Canada Michael Rosen, President Dorothy Dobbie, Past Chair Board of Directors</p> <p>Trees For Life, Urban Tree Coalition Mark Cullen, Chair</p>	2012/10/24	48
<p>Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Oliver Kent, President</p> <p>Grand River Conservation Authority Lorrie Minshall, Director Water Management Plan</p> <p>City of Winnipeg Rodney Penner, City Naturalist Naturalist Services</p>	2012/10/29	49

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>City of Surrey Carrie Baron, Manager Drainage and Environment, Engineering Department</p> <p>As an individual Kenneth Bennett, Former Environmental Manager Environmental Planning and Protection, City of Surrey</p> <p>Parks Canada Andrew Campbell, Vice-President External Relations and Visitor Experience</p> <p>David Suzuki Foundation Faisal Moola, Director General Ontario and the North Kiruthiha Kulendiren, Ontario Science Programs Manager Ontario and the North</p> <p>Friends of the Rouge Watershed Jim Robb, General Manager</p>	2012/10/31	50
<p>Child and Nature Alliance of Canada Marlene Power, Member Board of Directors, Director, Forest School Canada</p> <p>Living Prairie Museum Kyle Lucyk, Director</p> <p>Scouts Canada Mike Bingley, Outdoor Program Manager</p>	2012/11/21	54
<p>Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval Guy Garand, Managing Director Marie-Christine Bellemare, Project Officer</p> <p>Federation of Canadian Municipalities Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, Vice-Chair Standing Committee on Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development, Councillor, City of Brantford</p> <p>Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Ken Dion, Senior Project Manager Watershed Management Division</p> <p>As an individual Jim Tovey, Councillor, Ward 1 City of Mississauga</p>	2012/11/26	55

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec</p> <p>Andréanne Blais, Biologist John Husk, Member City Councillor, City of Drummondville</p> <p>Earth Rangers</p> <p>Peter Kendall, Executive Director Tovah Barocas, Director Development</p> <p>Olds College</p> <p>Gord Koch, Instructor School of Environment</p> <p>As an individual</p> <p>Robert Savard, Representative Green School Project, Municipal Councillor, City of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield</p>	2012/11/28	56
<p>Bridgeland-Riverside Vacant Lots Garden</p> <p>Michael Ricketts, Head Gardener</p> <p>Rideau Valley Conservation Authority</p> <p>Don Maciver, Director of Planning</p> <p>As an individual</p> <p>François Reeves, Interventional Cardiologist Faculty of Medicine, Associate Professor of Medicine Université de Montréal</p>	2012/12/03	57
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Normand Brunet, Consultant and Researcher in Environmental Science Institute of Environmental Sciences, Lecturer, Université du Québec à Montréal</p> <p>Canadian Wildlife Federation</p> <p>Kenneth Beattie, Manager Habitat Programs Luba Mycio Mommers, Director of Education</p> <p>Child and Nature Alliance of Canada</p> <p>Marlene Power, Member Board of Directors, Director, Forest School Canada</p> <p>Scouts Canada</p> <p>Mike Bingley, Outdoor Program Manager</p>	2012/12/05	58

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Infrastructure Canada</p> <p>Natasha Rascanin, Assistant Deputy Minister Program Operations Branch</p> <p>Bogdan Makuc, Director Program Operations, Program Integration</p> <p>Mohamed Nouhi, Principal Advisor Policy and Communications, Priority Initiatives Environmental Initiatives</p>	2013/03/07	64

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

Bennett, Kenneth

Brunet, Normand

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

Canadian Wildlife Federation

Child and Nature Alliance of Canada

Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval

Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec

David Suzuki Foundation

Ecology Action Centre

Friends of the Rouge Watershed

Living Prairie Museum

Olds College

Reeves, François

Rideau Valley Conservation Authority

Savard, Robert

Scouts Canada

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Tovey, Jim

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, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66 and 67](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Harold Albrecht, M.P.

Chair

SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION BY THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN URBAN CONSERVATION PLAN

The New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) would like to thank the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development and those who submitted briefs as part of the Committee's study on urban conservation practices in Canada.

The NDP members of the Committee support the Committee's report. However, the NDP would like to raise some additional points brought forward by witnesses during the study, as a supplement to the report presented to the House of Commons.

Climate change was a key topic of discussion throughout the study, and witnesses raised a number of concerns. The discussion addressed the significant impact that climate change could have on communities and on the future of these communities. It was brought to the Committee's attention that Canada's climate is undergoing significant changes, becoming warmer and drier.¹ This change affects urban conservation in a number of ways. First of all, the quality and quantity of our water resources is at risk.² Second, the spread of invasive species has led to the destruction of thousands of hectares of parklands and forest in the past.³ Third, heat islands increase the loss of biodiversity.⁴ Fourth, climate change affects urban conservation not only in terms of the environment, but also in terms of the economy. Some witnesses mentioned that the secondary impacts of climate change have caused property values to drop⁵ and led to increased management costs⁶ and, in the long term, cost billions in secondary impacts could cost \$6,500 billion in damages.⁷ Municipalities and their ecosystems will not be spared from this damage, which, in our opinion, creates a significant financial incentive to act ambitiously on climate change prevention.

Witnesses were also concerned about protecting fish habitats as part of overall ecosystem health and water quality, particularly for those municipalities situated on bodies of water. Many agreed that the solution is to return to using regulatory

¹ ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mrs. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, Vice-Chair, Standing Committee on Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development, Councillor, City of Brantford, Federation of Canadian Municipalities)

² ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Mr. Don Maciver, Director of Planning, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority)

³ ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mrs. Ceschi-Smith)

⁴ ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mr. Guy Garand, Managing Director, Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval)

⁵ ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mrs. Ceschi-Smith)

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Dr. François Reeves, Interventional Cardiologist, Faculty of Medicine, Associate Professor of Medicine, Université de Montréal, As an Individual)

measures to protect fish habitats. The following statement to the committee by Mr. Don Macivor encapsulates the collective opinion on this issue:

I would be worried about a total loss of fish habitat protection. If that does happen, then we are looking at ways we could achieve the same objectives using our own legislation, but it's an uncertain landscape that we are working in.⁸

Witnesses also reacted strongly to the recent budgetary restrictions that have resulted in countless cuts and scientists being laid off. They had serious concerns about the consequences⁹ that these budget restrictions and cuts could have on the quality of the environment.¹⁰

Witnesses also told the Committee that it would be to Canada's advantage to have Canadian-based environmental research¹¹ to better understand¹² and predict¹³ complex environmental changes.¹⁴ This would allow the government to target areas of concern¹⁵ and improve the cost-effectiveness¹⁶ of its actions in order to find the best-value solution.¹⁷

Lastly, the targets and goals mentioned in the report are underdeveloped. The New Democrats would have liked to have seen passages in the report that would have provided for the development and implementation of guidelines for tangible and realistic goals and targets for effective urban conservation. This should have been part of the vision for a national urban conservation plan.

⁸ ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Mr. Maciver)

⁹ ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mrs. Ceschi-Smith)

¹⁰ ENVI (December 5, 2012) (Mr. Normand Brunet, Consultant and Researcher in Environmental Science, Institute of Environmental Sciences, Lecturer, Université du Québec à Montréal, As an Individual)

¹¹ ENVI (November 26, 2012) (Mrs. Ceschi-Smith)

¹² ENVI (October 24, 2012) (Mr. Chris Manderson, Natural Area Management Lead, Parks, City of Calgary)

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Mr. Oliver Kent, President, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society)

¹⁵ ENVI (December 3, 2012) (Mr. Maciver)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ ENVI (October 29, 2012) (Ms. Lorrie Minshall, Director, Water Management Plan, Grand River Conservation Authority)

SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION

Liberal Party of Canada on the Report of Urban Conservation Practices in Canada

All parties have agreed to the report. After all, the majority of Canadians would, no doubt, agree to: ensuring the importance of interacting with nature, and that this should be reflected in the government's conversation plan; and the government's ensuring the development of a holistic approach to urban conservation, partnerships, and information sharing amongst stakeholders.

However, the Liberal Party is disappointed with the methodology undertaken for the report, that the resulting report is watered-down and lacking in strong recommendations, such as leadership, goals, targets, and funding. It is important to note, for example, that the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada has listed 668 wildlife species, including 297 endangered, 159 threatened, 190 of special concern, and 22 extirpated (meaning they are no longer found in the wild). It is therefore disappointing that benchmarks were not specified in the report, but rather "appropriate benchmarks" leaving considerable discretion. Moreover, controversial subjects, which require real discussion, such as the study area, the principles guiding the management plan, and the role of agriculture in the Rouge Park, were dropped from the report.

The Liberal Party is particularly concerned regarding the lack of mention of several witnesses' expression of concern regarding recent changes to federal environmental legislation, and more particularly, the *Fisheries Act*. The Liberal Party agrees with their concerns, as expressed in its Dissenting Report for Bill C-38, Part 3. The party's recommendations included that: the environment sections of Bill C-38 be removed; the government engage in regulatory overhaul for environmental laws that respect constitutionally protected Aboriginal Title, Rights and Treaty Rights, with appropriate engagement across the country; the government table in the House of Commons what

types of projects will be included/excluded under the proposed changes to CEAA, and specifically, the proportion and types of current assessments that will no longer receive federal oversight; the government table in the House of Commons assessments of the environmental assessment process in each province and territory, how the government will define whether or not a provincial process is equivalent to the federal process, and how assessment of cumulative impacts will be undertaken; the government protect fish and fish habitat, not erode 144 years of history, and that the Department develop new fisheries act policies and regulations in collaboration with all stakeholders; and the government define which fish will fall under Aboriginal, commercial, and recreational fisheries, and the criteria used.