

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Government's National Conservation Plan will ensure sustainability

Unlike the previous government, our government is fulfilling the commitments we have made to Canadians.

The Prime Minister's announcement of the National Conservation Plan provides a long-term vision for conservation efforts across Canada and brings together all Canadians who are working to conserve and restore our lands, waters, and wildlife.

The National Conservation Plan is a major accomplishment when it comes to ensuring the sustainability of our nation's greatest resources, contribute to our country's long-term prosperity and further position Canada as a world leader in conservation. The Plan will focus on conserving and restoring Canada's ecosystems, and connecting Canadians to nature. Prime Minister Harper's announcement celebrates and builds on Canada's collective conservation achievements and provides funding of \$252 million over five years for conserving ecologically sensitive lands, supporting voluntary conservation and restoration action, restoring wetlands, strengthening marine and coastal conservation, and improving access to wildlife areas and green spaces for Canadians.

Under the National Conservation Plan, parks, national wildlife areas and other green spaces will play an important role, both in terms of protecting Canada's natural heritage and providing Canadians with opportunities to experience nature. For example, urban and suburban Canadians will be more aware of the natural areas in their communities and the opportunities for outdoor recreational activities that exist.

It also encourages Canadians from all sectors and regions to get involved in environmental conservation efforts and collaborate on creative approaches that achieve tangible environmental, economic and social benefits.

I am proud of the work our government has already done to conserve and restore habitats and species for Canadians now and in the future and the National Conservation Plan builds on this strong record.

Since May 2014, and in addition to our National Conservation Plan, our government has tabled legislation to create two national parks and announced funding for 85 community conservation projects across the country.

Since 2006, our government has made a six-fold expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve, which is a significant conservation achievement. Over 4,000 square kilometres of ecologically sensitive private lands has been secured and we have added an area nearly twice the size of Vancouver Island to the network of federal protected areas. We have designated three new marine protected areas and introduced a legislation to create the Rouge National Urban Park.

We have supported partners in the delivery of hundreds of local projects to protect species at risk and their habitats. We have improved water quality in the Great Lakes, Lake Simcoe and Lake Winnipeg, rehabilitated recreational fisheries habitat, and are working to clean up contaminated sites.

Our role in helping Canadians to connect with nature is also not new. For example, through the My Parks Pass program, we are assisting families with young children and new Canadians living in urban areas with opportunities to learn camping and nature-related skills.

Our country's beautiful natural landscape and rich biodiversity are an integral part of our identity as Canadians. With the National Conservation Plan, our government is building a stronger Canada, a country that cares about conserving its natural heritage country where we can all enjoy the beauty of nature from coast to coast to coast.

With this strong track record as a base, the National Conservation Plan will allow us to continue to protect and enjoy our nation's rich biodiversity. Our government has launched a concrete plan that will not only protect our environment, but also have economic and social benefits for all Canadians.

Nature matters to Canadians. The National Conservation Plan encourages and enables Canadians to take action in their communities. Together, we will continue to find new ways to work together to protect our lands, waters, and wildlife.

