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November 7, 2020

To: The Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment & Climate Change Canada
The Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister
Scott Aitchison, MP for Parry Sound Muskoka
Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
Dan Albas, Conservative Shadow Cabinet Environment Minister
Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the NDP
Laurel Collins, NDP Shadow Cabinet Environment Minister
Annamie Paul, Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Expanding protected areas in Canada

We are writing to respectfully request that all parties support the expansion of Canada's protected areas as well as all necessary actions to make available sufficient resources to achieve these goals.

The Georgian Bay Association (GBA) is an umbrella organization for 19 community associations along the east and north shores of Georgian Bay, representing around 3,000 families. We have been advocating on behalf of our land-owning members for over 100 years and estimate that we reach around 18,000 residents of the Georgian Bay. Our mandate is to work with our water-based communities and other stakeholders to ensure the careful stewardship of the greater Georgian Bay environment.

The rationales for increasing the protected areas in Canada are set out below and in the attached Recommendations for Recovery and Budget Actions in 2020-2021 from the Green Budget Coalition. We support these objectives, believe that this should be a non-partisan issue, and that Canada would benefit from a cooperative, constructive approach that transcends any future change in government.

Canada's Protected Areas Agenda

Canada reaffirmed its commitment to protecting 25% of land and ocean by 2025 through the Throne Speech on September 23, 2020. We later signed up to the international 'High Ambition Coalition' committing to protect 30% by 2030 and work to secure this as a global target for all through the UN. In the 2019 election, most parties committed to protect 25% of both lands and inland waters and coastal waters by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

What is a protected area?

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), “a protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.” Protection, however, does not always isolate areas from commercial use, including industrial activity and the harvest of biological resources.

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)

IPCAs are Indigenous-led conservation areas that involve a long-term commitment to the conservation of lands and waters for future generations and highlight Indigenous rights and responsibilities. IPCAs contribute to Indigenous cultural, social and conservation priorities and are created in the spirit and practice of reconciliation. The process is consistent with existing federal, provincial and territorial government approaches and commitments from treaties, land claim and self-government agreements.

Current levels of protection

Currently, 12.1% of lands and inland waters, and 13.8% of coastal waters are protected in Canada.

Nature needs 50%

There is a growing scientific consensus that Canada, and the world, needs to protect at least half of lands and inland waters in an interconnected way to truly protect ecosystems and wildlife. The above targets are therefore an interim political objective, rather than a long term scientifically-supported goal.

The case for protected areas – why should we care?

- Creating protected areas is one of the most important tools we have to safeguard wildlife and nature. Canada has ample opportunities to take action and meet the targets given the country’s vast size, wealth and relatively small population.
- Designating protected areas, especially as IPCAs, is a key component of reconciliation with Indigenous communities in Canada. Reconciliation is not just needed between government and Indigenous peoples or within other societal contexts – it is also needed between humanity and the environment. IPCAs support traditional governance values and principles, and promote Indigenous guardianship of lands and waters.
- Canada is the second largest country in the world, containing 20% of the Earth’s wild forests, 24% of its wetland, and almost one third of its land-stored carbon. Canada’s lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands hold 20% of the world’s freshwater. Canada also has the world’s largest coastline and holds some of the global ocean’s most valuable deep-sea ecosystems. With such richness comes responsibility to protect our lands and waters for the wildlife and people who rely on them.

- With the majority of our country's nature unprotected, vertebrate species evaluated as at-risk in Canada (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish populations) have experienced average population declines of 59% between 1970 and 2016. This decline needs to stop and be reversed.
- Protected areas are good for our economy — parks and protected areas support at least 64,000 full time equivalent jobs across the country, and for every dollar spent by federal, provincial, and territorial park agencies, \$6 is returned to Canada's Gross Domestic Product.

Funding

To achieve the above objectives, the federal government needs to scale up investments in land protection and Indigenous-led conservation.

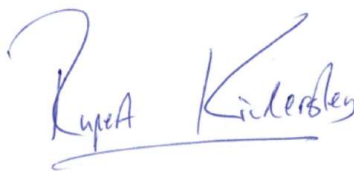
This protection will support economic activity, good jobs in local communities, and help address the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. But, to unlock these benefits, long term funding and non-partisan support from all federal government parties is needed.

We therefore support the Green Budget Coalition's call to invest \$4.8 billion between now and 2025 for the creation and management of land and marine protected areas, IPCAS and Guardian Programs.

Please could you consider supporting these important objectives that are pivotal to Canada's long-term environmental health.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely,



Rupert Kindersley
Executive Director

Copied to: Bill Lougheed, Georgian Bay land Trust
Becky Pollock & Greg Mason, Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve
David Sweetnam, Georgian Bay Forever