



Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance's consultations in advance of Budget 2026

Recommendation 1: The Government of Canada mobilize at least \$1.5 billion over the next four years to build ecological security and resilience to the negative impacts of climate change by taking action to restore, measure, monitor, and maintain large-scale ecosystems

Recommendation 2: The Government of Canada works to ensure that all major projects deliver benefits for nature and climate resilience while pursuing economic opportunities including identification of risks and mitigation measures for natural systems, species of cultural significance to Indigenous peoples and species-at-risk, while maintaining the intent of current federal environmental law and regulation.

Recommendation 3: The Government of Canada continue to prioritize and build on international biodiversity finance by committing \$300M to predictable, long-term grants programming through Global Affairs Canada, to protect and restore nature, while aligning these investments with the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and Canada's broader climate finance commitments.

Recommendation 4: The Privy Council Office and Treasury Board explore integrated delivery of environmental priorities and partnership initiatives across relevant departments to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, share knowledge, and accelerate our collective adaptation and resilience to climate change. As a feature of this integration, a coordinated cross-departmental funding platform will enrich program design and implementation objectives.

Recommendation 5: The Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs approve the Nunavut Land Use Plan without delay, and fund the costs associated with the related Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement upon implementation.

World Wildlife Fund Canada is one of the country's largest conservation organizations with active support of hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Our vision is a Canada with abundant wildlife where nature and people thrive. Collaboration and support for the priorities of First Nations and Inuit communities is central to how we work. Our commitment is to measurable on-the-ground results alongside our corporate, government, and community partners ensure long-lasting benefits for biodiversity, climate, communities, and wildlife.

Strong Nature for a Strong and Secure Canada

Evidence from around the globe reveals the many benefits of restoring natural ecosystems. Alongside the federal government's immediate plans for infrastructure and other major project development, there is a parallel window to derive biodiversity, climate, economic and community dividends from widespread restoration of degraded lands and coastal zones.

WWF Canada's submission encourages policymakers to seize this opportunity to rebuild Canada's treasured ecosystems, strengthen national resilience to climate change through integrated policymaking and programming, and commit to safeguarding sensitive habitats ahead of, and in combination with, large-scale developments, particularly in the Arctic.

Canada's Ecology Supports a Healthy Planet & Its Inhabitants

Canada is a country of vast ecological riches that contributes to the health and economic well-being of those who live in Canada, attracts visitors from around the globe, and provides habitat to thousands of wildlife species.

The contribution of Canada's lands and waters to healthy planet is recognized in international agreements,¹ where Canada and other countries have committed to restoring 30% of degraded lands and protecting 30% of lands and waters by 2030.

Restoration to Reduce Risk and Build Security

Ecosystem restoration buffers climate impacts, improves local livelihoods, stabilizes water tables, food systems and wildlife habitat.²

Canada's ecological wealth, along with the communities and wildlife that depend on it, are increasingly at risk due to the connected threats of biodiversity loss and accelerated impacts of climate change such as wildfires, regional drought, flooding, and loss of sea ice in the Arctic.

¹ Kunming- Montreal UN Global Biodiversity Framework. December 2022. <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>

² UK Government 2024. [National security assessment - global biodiversity loss ecosystem collapse and national security](#)

Against this challenging scenario, a recent study by WWF Canada³, has documented the loss of over 50 million hectares, half the size of Ontario, to destructive pressures. WWF's Living Canada Report 2025 highlights the steady and severe decline of nearly 60% of wildlife populations.

Strong Nature: A National Nature Restoration, Resilience and Security Fund

The evidence is both clear and abundant: complex ecosystem restoration increases biodiversity and strengthens resilience to our changing climate.

Through the design and delivery of a widescale effort focused on restoration of targeted ecosystems, the government has an opportunity to directly invest in our country's greatest resource, ensuring the health and vitality of generations to come.

Restoration strategies also offer direct, quantifiable economic value. The Great Lakes Restoration initiative found that investing in restoration in the lakes and associated watershed resulted in an additional \$3.35 US dollars added to the economy for each dollar spent⁴. A recent cost-benefit analysis of over 200 international ecosystem restoration initiatives revealed widespread profitability and even high returns on investment, as high as a 35:1 benefit ratio.⁵

The requested investment will enable targeted restoration of large-scale ecosystems, essential community assets, improved security measures, and the development of systems that protect residents, businesses, and public spaces.

Recommendation 1: The Government of Canada mobilize at least \$1.5 billion over the next four years to build ecological security and resilience to the negative impacts of climate change taking action to restore, measure, monitor, and maintain large-scale ecosystems

For Budget 2026, WWF Canada proposes *Strong Nature: A National Nature Restoration, Resilience and Security Fund (NNRRF)*. In collaboration with Indigenous, corporate, government and community partners, this initiative would advance several complementary objectives. The proposed NNRRF carries the potential to:

- Improve biodiversity in regions currently experiencing ecosystem degradation and wildlife loss.
- Strengthen the resiliency of major ecosystems to climate impacts and support adaptation to climate disruption already underway.

³ Currie, J. et. al. Prioritizing ecological restoration of converted lands in Canada by spatially integrating organic carbon storage and biodiversity benefits. 3 April 2023. *Conservation Science and Practice*. <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/csp2.12924>

⁴ Assessing the Investment: The Economic Impact of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Project Summary Report. September 2018. <https://www.glc.org/wp-content/uploads/GLRI-Project-Summary-Report-20180924.pdf>

⁵ De Groot, R.S. et al. "Benefits of Investing in Ecosystem Restoration" April 2013. *Conservation Biology*, Volume 27, Issue 6. <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/cobi.12158>

- Increase and protect carbon stored in nature.
- Create meaningful jobs among rural and remote communities.
- Heighten a sense of shared optimism and pride in Canada's ecological wealth.
- Advance understanding, innovation, and technologies to measure, monitor and maintain complex ecosystem restoration efforts.
- Support the government's current commitment to Indigenous nature guardianships in the Canadian Arctic and throughout Canada.

Reduce Risk to Major Projects from Not Taking Nature Into Account

Canada does not need to build economic prosperity at the cost of nature. The adoption of the *Building Canada Act* enables a regime for major national projects that is generating concern among Canadians who aspire to economic prosperity, but not at the expense of Canada's ecological wealth and beauty.

Legislation governing Canada's management of the environment has evolved over many years and in delicate balance with the development of our economy. WWF Canada urges the government to uphold the spirit of Canada's environmental law, ensure that Indigenous rights and consultation obligations are fully upheld in accordance with UNDRIP, and ensure biodiversity outcomes are integrated into the design of these projects.

Recommendation 2: The Government of Canada works to ensure that all major projects deliver benefits for nature and climate resilience while pursuing economic opportunities including identification of risks and mitigation measures for natural systems, species of cultural significance to Indigenous peoples and species-at-risk, while maintaining the intent of current federal environmental laws and regulations.

Given the breadth of our work across the country and deep knowledge of diverse ecosystems, WWF Canada can support the government in scoping an effective nature-positive process during the design phases of these projects.

Continue Funding for Biodiversity and Nature Internationally

The world faces an estimated US\$700 billion annual biodiversity financing gap, with at least \$30 billion per year in international flows needed by 2030 to support developing countries in protecting nature. These countries host much of the planet's biodiversity but often lack the financial capacity to conserve it. Without increased contributions from developed countries like Canada, global targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss will not be met.

A targeted \$300 million investment would build on this foundation, help close the global funding gap, and ensure Canada remains an international leader in delivering the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Recommendation 3: The Government of Canada continue to prioritize and build on international biodiversity finance by committing \$300M to predictable, long-term grants programming through Global Affairs Canada, to protect and restore nature, while aligning these investments with the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and Canada’s broader climate finance commitments.

Integration of Environment Priorities & Initiatives Across Federal Departments

How the federal government partners with communities, corporations, Indigenous groups, and organizations to manage environmental challenges has grown more complex in recent decades. Canada’s natural resources are the bedrock of our economy, and as our energy sources change, as new technologies are developed, and new strategies employed for environmental stewardship, more government departments have a role to play. As recent federal studies have shown, the breadth and complexity of initiatives required to manage our primary economic resource is too much for a single department to carry.⁶

Recent nature and climate improvement programs, with mandates applicable to multiple federal departments, have been executed independently by individual departments. A more coordinated approach, where a single environmental program is positioned to integrate outcomes that fall across several departments (for example, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Energy and Natural Resources, Canadian Identity and Culture, Northern and Arctic Affairs, One Canadian Economy), would multiply benefits for taxpayers.

Recommendation 4: The Privy Council Office and Treasury Board explore integrated delivery of environmental priorities and partnership initiatives across relevant departments to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, share knowledge, and accelerate our collective adaptation and resilience to climate change. As a feature of this integration, a coordinated cross-departmental funding platform will enrich program design and implementation objectives.

The effects of biodiversity loss and climate change continue to implicate most areas of federal decision-making. By integrating environment-related priorities and initiatives across more departments now, the Government of Canada will grow more sophisticated in its approach to environmental policymaking and programming. Through the adoption of this recommendation, Canada will be closer to fulfilling its UN Global Biodiversity Framework target that emphasizes the value of “biodiversity mainstreaming” in all areas of policymaking.⁷

⁶ House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. Study: Federal Grants and Contributions Process (ECCC audits). October 2024.

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/committees/en/OGGO/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=12869162>

⁷ Kunming- Montreal UN Global Biodiversity Framework. December 2022. <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>

Safeguarding the Ecological Integrity of the Canadian Arctic

The health of the Arctic's unique ecology is critical to the pace and intensity of climate change, placing Canada in a global leadership position. Life-giving ecosystems in these areas are supported by healthy local habitats, including for culturally significant wildlife that Inuit communities rely on for sustenance and livelihoods.

For over a decade WWF Canada has supported Inuit communities in contributing their knowledge and priorities to the development of the Nunavut Land Use Plan (NLUP). The Plan seeks to designate nearly 20% of the Nunavut Settlement Area as Limited Use, prohibiting future industrial development and associated activities in areas identified by the people of Nunavut as off-limits.

Implementation of the NLUP will also secure habitat and migration routes for caribou, narwhal, belugas, Arctic char, walrus, polar bear and other Arctic ecosystem dependent species.

Recommendation 5: The Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs approve the Nunavut Land Use Plan without delay, and fund the costs associated with the related Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement upon implementation.

The NLUP, currently under consideration for approval, represents the largest land use planning exercise ever undertaken, covering over 2 million square kilometres of land, freshwater and marine area. Its approval is consistent with the Nunavut Agreement, the priorities of the people of Nunavut, and is critical to Canada meeting its global biodiversity commitments since it would contribute 4.5% to Canada's 30% protection target.

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