



A FORCE OF NATURE: CANADA'S STRATEGY TO PROTECT NATURE

-Briefing Note



SENATORS FOR CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

SÉNATEURS POUR DES SOLUTIONS CLIMATIQUES





Source: CPAC News Announcement

“ The beauty of Canada's nature — from lakes and forests to mountains and coastlines — is central to our history, our identity, and our way of life. With unprecedented conservation efforts, the power of modern technology, and the wisdom of Indigenous traditions, our new nature strategy will protect what matters most. ”

Prime Minister Mark Carney –
Wakefield, Québec, March 31, 2026

A Landmark Commitment to Canada's Lands, Waters, and Wildlife

Prime Minister Mark Carney launched A Force of Nature: Canada's Strategy to Protect Nature on March 31, 2026, representing a \$3.8 billion federal investment to protect and restore Canada's natural environment. The strategy arrives as Canada's Enhanced Nature Legacy Program – a \$2.3 billion, five-year conservation fund – expired on the same day, with federal conservation spending projected to drop sharply from \$953 million to \$366 million in 2026–27. Conservation groups had been sounding the alarm for months.

Canada committed at the 2022 Kunming-Montréal Biodiversity Conference to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030 – the "30x30" target. As of late 2024, less than 14% of land and freshwater and under 16% of marine areas were protected. This strategy aims to close that gap dramatically, organized around three pillars: protect nature, build Canada well, and mobilize capital for nature.

\$3.8B FEDERAL INVESTMENT

80,000 SPECIES SUPPORTED

15.5% → 30% (715,857 km²) MARINE TARGET BY 2030

14% → 30% (1.6M km²) TERRESTRIAL TARGET BY 2030

Three Pillars of Action

01

Protect Nature

- 14 new marine protected areas
- 10+ new national parks
- 15 national urban parks
- Wiinipaakw Indigenous Protected Area (James Bay)
- Seal River Watershed park reserve
- \$230M for Indigenous Guardians + new Arctic program
- \$90M for Wood Buffalo National Park
- Ghost Gear Fund expansion

02

Build Canada Well

- AI mapping of Key Biodiversity Areas
- Regional assessments under Impact Assessment Act
- Mitigation hierarchy for development
- Canada's first National Water Security Strategy
- \$410M for Pacific Salmon Strategy
- \$80M for Atlantic Salmon Strategy
- Strengthened species at risk protections

03

Mobilize Capital

- Expert Taskforce on Natural Capital Accounting (spring 2026)
- New policies to attract private conservation investment
- Public-private partnership frameworks
- Nature-positive financing models
- Integration of nature value into economic decision-making



International context

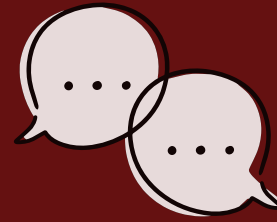
Connection to COP30 and global commitments

This strategy builds on commitments from the Kunming–Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework (December 2022) and COP30 in Belém, Brazil (November 2025). The Belém Package included a commitment to triple adaptation finances by 2035, a Global Climate Accelerator prioritizing nature-based solutions, and the Belém Mechanism for Just Global Transition – all reflected in this strategy's pillars.

Canada's strong Indigenous-led conservation component aligns with the "Indigenous COP" spirit of COP30 and Canada's obligations under UNDRIP. Canada also signed the Belém Declaration of Fighting Environmental Racism at COP30.

Canada's natural capital: Canada holds 20% of the world's freshwater, 37% of its lakes, 25% of wetlands, 24% of boreal forests, and the world's longest coastline. Its wetlands provide an estimated \$225 billion/year in ecosystem services; its boreal forests approximately \$703 billion/year.

Some responses to the strategy...



Nature Canada



Nature Canada welcomed the investment after weeks of alarm over the expiring Enhanced Nature Legacy Program. Executive director Emily McMillan and policy manager David Wallis had warned that Canada was "not on track" to meet 30x30 goals. The organization acknowledges the new funding while noting the jury is still out on whether it fully closes the gap left by expiring programs.

Green Budget Coalition



Andrew Van Iterson, manager of the Green Budget Coalition, a network of 21 leading Canadian environmental organizations, said the announcement "provides a solid base for continued progress – but expressed concern about dependence on private-sector partners."

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society



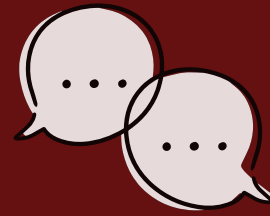
Sandra Schwartz (executive director) called the announcement encouraging but conditional: she said it was "encouraging to see elements of this announcement reflect long-standing recommendations from CPAWS," but that its value would "depend on what happens next."

Indigenous Leadership Initiative



"We are pleased to see that Canada's new nature strategy recognizes the vital role Indigenous Nations and their communities play in achieving conservation and climate goals" – Valerie Courtois ILI Executive Director

Some responses to the strategy...



WWF-Canada



"Today is a good day for nature. The government's Nature Strategy affirms the real commitments Canada has made to protect and restore nature – essential commitments as biodiversity loss and climate change intensify," Megan Leslie, President and CEO of WWF-Canada said.

David Suzuki Foundation



Director Erin Roger called the strategy the "ultimate national interest project" and urged the government to "scale up" investments on conservation, warning that "beyond protecting 30 per cent, we can't allow continued degradation of the other 70 per cent" and that commitments "will be put to the test as the government considers major infrastructure projects."

Greenpeace Canada



In a statement, Greenpeace Canada said the announcement, while welcome, lacked ambition. "More parks won't restore the grasslands, forests and waters threatened by climate change, pollution and resource exploitation as long as Canada continues its 'extraction first, nature and people last' approach,"

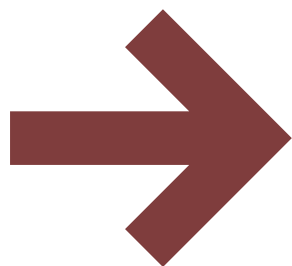
Fisheries and Oceans Canada



Fisheries and Oceans Canada

"It's not just about what we are conserving domestically – that commitment to 30x30 also extends to the high seas, because the high seas is 70 per cent of the ocean's surface," said Andrew McMaster, director of ocean policy for Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Read the Full Strategy Report



A Force of Nature: Canada's Strategy to Protect Nature



 Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

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