



February 16, 2017

Hon. Catherine McKenna
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa ON K1A 0H6

Hon. Shannon Phillips
Minister of Environment and Parks
Legislature Building
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Re: *Pathway to Canada Target 1 Initiative*

Dear Ministers McKenna and Phillips,

Canada's nature and wilderness protection community wishes to congratulate you and other provincial and territorial ministers responsible for protected areas and biodiversity conservation on your *Pathway to Canada Target 1* initiative. The signatory organizations are delighted that Ministers are working together to expand Canada's protected areas network. We strongly support this collaborative approach, and are looking forward to working with all levels of government to help deliver on Canada's commitment under Aichi Target 11 to protect at least 17% of our land and inland waters by 2020.

There is much work to do over the next four years. Our organizations can play an important role by raising public awareness and support for this effort and by working with governments and stakeholders across the country on strategies to achieve the target.

We wish to take the opportunity of the upcoming ministerial meeting on February 21-22 to offer several recommendations for reaching the target so the ultimate goal of conserving biodiversity is also achieved:

1. *Start by implementing existing commitments and proposals* – Across Canada, governments at all levels are currently working to establish new protected areas and expand protection of existing areas. The signatories recommend that a first step towards achieving the 17% target should be to act quickly to implement existing commitments and proposals. Our calculations show that meeting existing commitments and proposals alone would bring Canada to at least 15% protection.
2. *Action plans to get to the 2020 target and beyond* - Each government should develop an action plan to achieve the 2020 target, and look beyond 2020 to the large landscape-scale protection needed to conserve nature. The plans should identify areas to be protected, and lay out a process and schedule for implementation.

3. *Quality as well as quantity* - The goal of the Aichi targets is to reverse the global decline of biodiversity loss in order to protect the life-support system of the planet. Canada contributes to this biodiversity loss, yet lags much of the world in protecting ecosystems with high biodiversity. Changing the accounting system to include more existing conservation measures will not itself achieve progress towards conserving biodiversity. To achieve the goal of conserving healthy ecosystems, more of Canada's land, ocean and freshwater needs to be protected, with a particular focus on areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystems services. As well, these areas need to be well-designed, well-managed and connected together.

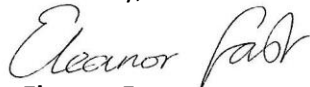
The signatories acknowledge that the 17% target includes other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). The Canadian Council on Ecological Areas (CCEA) has developed science-based guidance for OECMs in the Canadian context with the involvement of government experts and non-governmental organizations. The signatories recommend that the CCEA guidance on OECMs be adopted for use in the *Pathway* initiative.

4. *Working with Indigenous governments*— There are significant opportunities to work with Indigenous governments to establish Indigenous and co-managed protected areas. Such opportunities could be explored as elements of nation-to-nation discussions.
5. *Protected areas and climate change* – The signatories are similarly convinced that establishing new protected areas as natural solutions to climate change can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by storing carbon, and enable adaptation to changing climatic conditions. The signatories recommend that these opportunities be pursued through *Pathway to Canada Target 1*, and through long-term conservation planning.
6. *Exceeding 17% beyond 2020* – The scientific evidence is clear that nature needs much more than 17% protection if biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services are to be maintained, particularly in the face of climate change. The 2020 target is thus an interim goal, not a final destination. The signatories therefore recommend that the Pathway process develop a long-term, evidence-based plan to scale up protection concurrent with the effort to protect at least 17% by 2020.

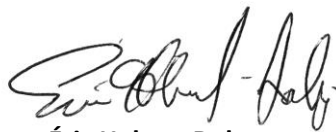
Finally, we wish to acknowledge that Canada's Aichi commitment to protect at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 is equally important to our organizations, and that we are working closely with federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments and stakeholders to support achievement of this target as well.

We wish you every success in your deliberations on protected areas on February 21 – 22, and look forward to working with you over the coming days, months and years.

Sincerely,



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Signed above on behalf of:



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cc:

Hon. John B. Ames, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, New Brunswick
Hon. Luc Blanchette, Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Parks, Quebec
Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, Saskatchewan
Hon. Cathy Cox Minister of Sustainable Development, Manitoba
Hon. Rick Doucet, Minister of Energy and Resource Development, New Brunswick
Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister of Environment, Yukon
Hon. David Heurtel, Minister of Sustainable Development, the Environment and the Fight against Climate Change, Quebec
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