

OFAH FEDERAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE - 2015

1. Hunting, fishing and trapping are recognized as heritage activities in Canada, through federal and provincial legislation. Collectively, fishing, hunting, trapping and outfitting contribute \$15.2 billion annually to the national economy and make a significant contribution to the social and cultural fabric of this country.

QUESTION:

What is your party's position on fishing, hunting and trapping?

2. Since the 1990's, the OFAH has urged the federal government and its provincial counterparts to address the threat posed to wildlife, most notably deer, elk and moose, from Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and recommended a ban on the existence of cervid (deer and elk) farms. The wildlife equivalent of BSE (mad cow disease), there is definitive scientific evidence that CWD originated in cervid farms in the western United States, and has now spread to over a dozen states and two Canadian provinces (Saskatchewan and Alberta). There is no live test for CWD. In jurisdictions where the disease has spread to the wildlife population, state and provincial governments have culled tens of thousands of infected animals in an attempt to stop the spread of the disease, with no success. The number of cervid farms in Ontario and elsewhere has declined, as has their economic viability. Escapes of farmed animals and the potential interaction of these animals with the wild population is cause for profound concern. The spread of CWD could have enormous impacts on the ecological and socio-economic benefits of wildlife in Canada and potentially result in the annihilation of some wildlife species.

QUESTION:

If elected, will your government end all funding for the cervid (deer and elk) farm industry and commit to banning cervid farms, the primary vector for the spread of CWD, with compensation for the owners?

3. The OFAH supports the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) Sea Lamprey Control Program, which protects the \$7 billion recreational and commercial fisheries of the Great Lakes Basin, a one-of-a-kind world-class resource. The GLFC has been successfully controlling the invasive Sea Lamprey population in the Great Lakes since the mid-1950's, which has allowed for a resurgence of recreational, commercial and Aboriginal fisheries. The current appropriation provided to the Sea Lamprey program by the federal government sits at \$8.1 million annually, which has remained static since 2006. In comparison, funding from the U.S. government has increased during this same period to \$16.1 million annually. This funding shortfall has hampered the GLFC Sea Lamprey control program, leaving the Great Lakes ecosystem vulnerable to future threats.

QUESTION:

If you form the next government, will you commit to increasing the Canadian funding envelope for the GLFC Sea Lamprey Control Program to the same level provided by the U.S.?

4. The OFAH remains concerned with amendments to the former Navigable Waters Protection Act now known as the Navigation Protection Act, because of potential public access restrictions to our lakes, rivers and streams. The new act will only protect our right of navigation in listed waters (162 oceans, lakes and rivers across all of Canada). Navigation barriers on unlisted waters can now only be addressed through the courts (Common Law). While it does not appear that changes to the Act were intended to impede public access, the potential exists that the public will potentially lose access to thousands of waterbodies.

QUESTION:

If you form the next government, will you work with the OFAH and other stakeholders across the country to explore ways to ensure that Canadians will have continued access to our lakes, rivers and streams?

5. One of the recommendations that came out of the first National Fish & Wildlife Conservation Congress in 2012 was the creation of a national fish and wildlife advisory group to provide expertise and advice to the federal government on conservation of fish and wildlife in Canada. The government responded by creating the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel (HAAP), composed of twenty five of the largest conservation based organizations in Canada, including the OFAH and Ducks Unlimited Canada. The panel has met six times since 2012 and provided the Minister of Environment and Fisheries and Oceans with a number of recommendations, some already implemented, that will enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats from coast to coast to coast.

QUESTION:

If elected, will your government commit to supporting HAAP and work with the panel to protect, enhance and support the sustainable use of fish and wildlife across Canada?

6. The federal government has responsibility for National Parks, National Wildlife areas and Marine Protected Areas. Fishing and hunting are sustainable activities and are already regulated by provinces and territories. No additional regulation of fish and wildlife harvest is need within these protected areas. Unlike Quebec, National Parks and National Wildlife areas in Ontario do not currently permit hunting.

QUESTION:

If you form the next government, will you work with the OFAH and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable fishing and hunting opportunities remain in Marine Protected Areas, are enhanced in National Parks and National Wildlife Areas?

7. The federal Recreational Fisheries Partnerships Program (RFCPP) provides funding to community-based projects intended to enhance Canada’s multi-billion dollar recreational fishery and the many benefits it provides to Canadians. There are many more local and community-based projects that would benefit from continuation of this program in perpetuity.

Terrestrial-based (wildlife) community conservation initiatives are also important in Canada and would benefit from a similar dedicated funding source. Projects that seek to maintain and restore habitats for terrestrial wildlife (e.g. mammals, pollinators), should also be a priority for the federal government.

QUESTION:

If you form the next government, will you continue funding for the RFCPP and create a dedicated program to support wildlife habitat enhancement in Canada?

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- 8. There are currently about 100 comprehensive land claims across the country. Many stakeholders and members of the public feel that there has been an absence of meaningful consultation during land claim negotiations in Canada, and feel marginalized by government representation. In many cases, extensive public funding is provided to Aboriginal communities involved in these claims, but currently there are no funding sources that facilitate stakeholder and public involvement in the land claim process.

QUESTION:

If elected, will you commit to ensuring that stakeholders and the public have an opportunity to provide meaningful input into discussions around land claims that affect them, and establish a funding envelope to allow non-Aboriginal groups and individuals to access funds to assist them in representing their interests during the claims process?

- 9. Millions of Canadians are legal, trained and licensed firearms owners, who use firearms for hunting or recreational sport shooting.

Over the past few years, Parliament approved a number of changes to the Criminal Code and Firearms Act, including the elimination of the long gun registry for non-restricted rifles and shotguns, and the rationalization of several laws and regulations applying to firearms ownership and use in Canada that have benefitted law-abiding firearms owners without compromising public safety.

QUESTION:

If you form the next government, will you commit to not restoring a long gun registry for non-restricted rifles and shotguns, and work with stakeholder groups representing law abiding firearms owners to continue firearms reforms that recognize the legitimate ownership and use of legal firearms in Canada?

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10. The federal government provides funding for non-government organizations to acquire lands to protect important ecological features and ecosystems. Some of these lands are not available to the public for heritage activities such as fishing, hunting and trapping. These are regulated low-impact activities that are fully compatible with ecological conservation, and in many cases, are integral to the management of wildlife populations, restoring ecosystem health and maintaining biodiversity.

QUESTION: If elected, will your government provide a dedicated funding source for non-government organizations to acquire lands that will remain available for public use, particularly heritage activities?

11. Harmful invasive species continue to be one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in Canada. Species like zebra mussels, round goby, sea lamprey and phragmites are having a negative impact, and the potential introduction of new invasive species like Asian Carps pose significant threats to our ecosystems and economy, as well as our social and cultural well-being as Canadians. In the past, the federal government has provided funding through the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program.

QUESTION: If you form the next government, will you commit to establishing a permanent and dedicated funding program to fight the threat posed by invasive species?
