

Conservative Party Response to National Fishing and Hunting Collaborative Priorities

Conservatives believe that sport shooting, hunting and fishing are a proud part of our shared Canadian heritage. It is also an industry that creates \$8.5 billion in annual economic activity and employs nearly 50,000 Canadians. But more than that, it's a way for Canadians to connect back with nature and their families. Hunters and anglers are unsurpassed in their knowledge of the natural world and do some of the best work to protect our environment and keep our water, land and air clean. We absolutely must support the good work that they do and not put needless regulatory barriers in the way.

I would like to address your five national priorities, as well as some other issues important to your members.

A Conservative Government will respect hunters and anglers. We will re-establish the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel so that those who enjoy and conserve our natural environment will have a prominent voice in decision making that impacts them. Further, we have committed to appoint a Minister of Rural Affairs, and to take measures to force bureaucrats in Ottawa to look at all decisions from the perspective of rural Canadians. Rural Canadians – particularly those who live in areas where hunting and fishing occur – deserve a seat at the table.

When it comes to cracking down on crime, Conservatives know that law abiding firearms owners are not the problem. Criminals and gang members are the problem. Rather than following the lazy Liberal approach of demonizing the 2.2 million law-abiding gun owners, we will do the tough work of cracking down on criminals. And we will repeal C-71, and always stand up for the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

Across the country, there are invasive species and major pests that can degrade habitat, kill or displace other species, introduce parasites, or impact our interactions with the environment. These include pine beetles, Asian carp, emerald ash borer, and zebra mussels. Conservatives will provide a comprehensive update of Canada's strategy to protect our fisheries, forests, agricultural lands, and tourist areas. Specifically, we will review and update the Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada, as well as the invasive species action plans. We will also build on the important work that is done by Parks Canada to control pest species on waterways and lands that pose a substantial threat to forest and aquatic health. Regarding chronic wasting disease, the spread of this disease among members of the deer family has been a great cause for concern. A Conservative Government will explore all measures necessary to combat CWD, including ending the interprovincial transport of live cervids.

Conservatives will reinstate and improve conservation project funding. Workers and volunteers roll up their sleeves and work on conservation projects in their communities. This kind of community-minded action gets real results and should be supported. We will restore funding for the community-led National Wetland Conservation fund. We will restore funding for the community-led Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program. We will create a new fund for community-based projects targeted to wildlife enhancement. We will maintain the community-led Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. And we will maintain important national conservation programs, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the Natural Heritage Conservation Program.

Conservatives are very concerned about the Liberal approach to creating Marine Protected Areas, particularly with Bill C-55. This Bill would allow the government to create Marine Protected Areas up front, and put the onus on communities and stakeholders to convince them to make changes afterward. This is unfair. Up-front consultations are an essential component of the planning process and should not be ignored. We also believe that Marine Protected Areas should not simply be an excuse to impose a blanket no-fishing ban. Instead, we believe that they should have specific management objectives, and that activities should be allowed or disallowed on the basis of those objectives.

Conservatives will also work with industry to encourage the production of ammunition that is an alternative to lead. However, we will not ban the use of lead ammunition. There is no science-based reason for this politically driven issue to move forward.

Conservatives will also work with all partners to ensure that access to public lands for hunting, fishing and conservation activities is maintained and promoted.

We will also expand the recreational fishing of Striped Bass in the Gulf of St Lawrence and the Mirimichi River.

Conservatives will also continue the very strong working relationship that we have with all of the member organizations of the National Fishing and Hunting Collaborative to make sure that we continue to protect the rights of hunters and anglers.

The Honourable Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada