



BRIEFING

PRIORITIES FOR THE 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION

Promotion of Fishing, Hunting, and Trapping

Opportunity

Active promotion of fishing, hunting, and trapping as cultural heritage activities and significant economic contributors will maintain participation rates and aid recruitment, prevent unsustainable attrition rates, and position Canada as a premier destination for these activities.

Responsibility

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Canadian Heritage, Destination Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)

Achievability

The conservation of our fish and wildlife resources is an important issue for Canadians. Political parties can capitalize on Canadians' interest in environmental issues beyond climate change. The federal government can play a leadership role in enhancing the profile of these heritage activities. The pandemic has fostered a renewed appreciation for nature-based activities across the country, and there exists tremendous potential to grow and diversify support for outdoor activities using existing platforms and previous models that have produced tangible results in the past.

Background

- Nine out of 10 Canadians recently surveyed think fish and wildlife conservation should be a priority in Canada. The same proportion of Canadians think that sustainable use is an important component of conservation.
- Hunting, fishing, and trapping are considered heritage activities in Canada and are recognized as such under various pieces of federal and provincial legislation. For example, National Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing Heritage Day was established in 2014 by the *National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day Act*.
- The Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada, a ~~nationally coordinated~~ nationally coordinated study by DFO, occurs every five years. There is currently no equivalent national study for hunting or trapping.
 - In 2019, a group of non-government organizations and companies (including all NFHC affiliate organizations) commissioned The Economic Footprint of Angling, Hunting, Trapping and Sport Shooting in Canada to help fill in the blanks.
- Over 5.685 million Canadians participate in hunting, fishing, trapping, or shooting sports.
- In 2018, fishing, hunting, trapping, and sport shooting:
 - resulted in \$18.9 billion in direct spending in Canada;
 - contributed \$13.2 billion to Canada's gross domestic product – 0.6% of the Canadian economy;
 - supported nearly 107,000 Canadian jobs, and labour income estimated at \$6.4 billion; and
 - boosted federal and provincial government revenues by \$6.1 billion.
- Fish and wildlife conservation efforts are largely funded by anglers, hunters, and trappers through licence fees, and these participants have proven to be some of the most engaged citizens in grassroots conservation efforts. A prime example is the Canadian wildlife habitat conservation stamp that waterfowl hunters must purchase; these fees go directly to Wildlife Habitat Canada, which funds habitat restoration and protection projects across the country.

- While the number of recreational fishing licences increased by 7.4% between 2005 and 2015, the number of people participating in hunting and trapping has declined across North America in recent years. This creates concern about how to fund conservation and fish and wildlife management efforts. There is a need to engage new outdoors enthusiasts and introduce non-traditional audiences to hunting, fishing, and trapping.
- In 2012, the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel (HAAP) was established to provide advice to the Government of Canada on federal policies, programs, and activities related to conservation, hunting, trapping, and fishing. The group, composed of 25 leading conservation organizations, also promoted and encouraged the effective stewardship of Canada's aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, endangered species, and the protection of wetlands. HAAP has not met in recent years.

Proposed Solutions

- Active promotion of fishing, hunting, and trapping:
 - Develop and implement a *National ~~Fishing, Hunting, and Trapping~~ and Fishing Strategy* to outline approaches for the Government of Canada to actively promote the heritage value and modern relevance of these activities in Canada. Identify strategies for recruitment, retention, and reactivation of anglers, hunters and trappers in Canada with funding to support those strategies across the country.
 - Re-establish the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel (HAAP) to provide advice to the Government of Canada on federal policies, programs, and activities related to conservation, hunting, trapping, and fishing.
 - Invest in increasing awareness of and public participation in National Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing Heritage Day (third Saturday in September).
 - Establish a recurring (every 5 years) socio-economic study of the value of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Canada.
- Invest in the next generation of conservationists:
 - Create a federal grant program to support youth conservation initiatives.
 - Enhance existing federal work experience programs with dedicated support for careers in sustainable resource development (e.g., Summer Work Experience through Canada Summer Jobs; Young Canada Works).

Benefits

If ~~participation in outdoor activities continues to decline~~ the recent increased interest in outdoor activities cannot be sustained post-pandemic, funding for fish and wildlife conservation and management will be inadequate to meet the government's fiduciary obligations and the needs of Canadians. A National Strategy will guide all levels of government (federal-provincial-territorial) towards encouraging sustainable development activities. Active promotion of these heritage activities is a straightforward and relatively low-cost method of enhancing their profile, maintaining/increasing participation, and positioning Canada as a world-class tourist destination for outdoor experiences for residents and non-residents alike. Promoting recruitment and retention of anglers, hunters, and trappers has direct benefits to conservation through sustainable funding, creates jobs, and contributes significantly to the Canadian economy. Engaging youth in the environment resonates with all Canadians, and strategic commitments will generate short- and long-term sustainable benefits for conservation, jobs in the environmental sector, and the economy. A recurring socio-economic survey will communicate to the public the importance of these heritage activities to Canadians and the national economy.