

# ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS



*Ontario Conservation Centre*

P.O. Box 2800, 4601 Guthrie Drive, Peterborough, Ontario K9J 8L5  
Phone: (705) 748.6324 • Fax: (705) 748.9577 • Visit: [www.ofah.org](http://www.ofah.org) • Email: [ofah@ofah.org](mailto:ofah@ofah.org)

OFAH FILE:  
February 18, 2021

Vance Badawey  
Member of Parliament, Niagara Centre  
136 East Main Street, Unit 103,  
Welland, Ontario  
L3B 3W6

Dear MP Badawey:

**Subject: 2021 Pre-Budget Consultation – Great Lakes**

Thank you for the opportunity to share our ideas for how the Government of Canada can shape the 2021 Budget to support the people now, and build towards a strong economic recovery, specifically as it relates to the Great Lakes. The opportunity to share these ideas directly with you and discuss them with other Great Lakes stakeholders during the pre-budget consultation on February 11, 2020 was particularly beneficial. You have a clear passion for the Great Lakes, and we appreciate you bringing this enthusiasm to Parliament Hill as a champion for these critical issues.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) is Ontario's largest non-profit, fish and wildlife conservation organization, representing 100,000 members, supporters, and subscribers, and 725 member clubs.

The 2021 budget, and many that will follow, will seek to fill holes left in the wake of this pandemic. Personal, business, and societal economic challenges will worsen the growing mental health concerns arising from pandemic-related stress, anxiety, and grief that the people of Ontario are dealing with.

We need to focus near-term stimulus and job creation on actions that will not only help the people of Canada today, but also help us create and strengthen sustainable and lasting economies. Investments that help to fortify the social and mental well-being of the people of Canada while providing stimulus and economic response will be our fastest route to recovery.

The Great Lakes basin is home to more than 30 million people, including more than 30-percent of Canada's population. The lakes help to move \$19.8 billion worth of goods each year, support 237,868 jobs, and \$45.4 billion in economic activity. The Great Lakes are also one of the world's largest surface freshwater ecosystems, making up about 21% of the world's freshwater supply and provide drinking water for millions of Canadians.

The Great Lakes basin also supports incredible biological diversity with 3,500 species of plants and animals. The lakes provide cultural significance and sustenance for many Indigenous communities, while offering diverse recreational and tourism opportunities as a critical part of Canada's economic engine. Recreation and resource-related interests alone are estimated to generate more than \$13 billion annually.

These interests and related economies are dependent on the health of the Great Lakes, and are vulnerable to past, ongoing and future threats like habitat loss, pollution, nutrient loading, aquatic invasive species, and climate change.

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While some of Canada's traditional social and recreational economies will remain challenged in the near-term by restrictions, post-pandemic anxiety, and significant uncertainty, the outdoor recreation sector has remained relatively strong throughout the pandemic and can continue to be a source of economic and social strength as the people of Canada seek safety in outdoor activities that also offer mental and physical health benefits. In 2020, Ontario reported a significant increase in resident fishing licence sales, indicating Ontarians have discovered, or re-discovered, angling to be an important and relaxing opportunity.

Like almost all other sectors, fishing and hunting has been impacted by COVID-19. The closure of the Canada-US border has eliminated non-resident tourism, and some residents have not been able to participate. Despite these challenges, it remains a strong economic sector for Canada and has considerable room for growth with proper investment.

We are proposing moderate government investments that will create jobs and drive economic stimulus in the outdoors sector, while generating long-term conservation, economic, and mental health benefits that can be sustained for the people of Canada. The following are two OFAH requests for the 2021 Canada budget, with all of them relating directly to the Great Lakes. We are asking the Government of Canada to:

- 1. Invest in the promotion of fishing and hunting to encourage domestic participation and spending, as well as domestic tourism related to fishing and hunting.** The idea of 'staycations' has always been an important part of Canada's outdoors culture. Ontario, like all other provinces and territories, has so many diverse fishing and hunting opportunities that many anglers and hunters spend their vacation time and money within their own jurisdiction. Although fishing and hunting supports many tourism destinations, a lot of outdoors-related 'tourism' spending occurs at gas stations, grocery and hardware stores, restaurants, motels, and other small businesses in northern and rural areas that are not fishing and hunting outfitters or retailers. For this reason, fishing and hunting is often overlooked and undervalued as a source of significant domestic tourism. We strongly encourage the government to invest in promotion of fishing and hunting to 1) encourage 'staycation' tourism among anglers and hunters, and 2) encourage recruitment from outside of the existing fishing and hunting community through exposure to new audiences. This investment will not only encourage immediate stimulus through spending related to the activities themselves, but it will also boost licence sales and in Ontario that revenue is dedicated for fish and wildlife management. There are many possibilities for investments could be made, and benefits achieved. Promoting Canada's outdoors has been a longstanding priority for the OFAH, and we would be open to a discussion about how our messaging and broad audience reach could be leveraged to promote domestic outdoor tourism.
- 2. Make immediate investments in municipal infrastructure projects like boat launches, dedicated and accessible fishing areas, and docks that can promote and facilitate access for Canadians to participate in water-based outdoor recreation.** We also ask the government to invest in infrastructure like aging dam mitigation projects and other habitat projects to create immediate green jobs and economic stimulus, as well as long-term environmental benefits. Additional investments in invasive species mitigation and water quality improvement will also support strong and sustainable resource-based economies and reduce high future mitigation costs. These projects are particularly important shoreline infrastructure investments in communities on the shores of the Great Lakes and tributaries. We are proposing six infrastructure project ideas outlined in the attached document with a more detailed description, specific budget request, and list of potential partners for each.

Our proposals for the 2021 Canada Budget are not simply spending plans. They are strategic investments in fish and wildlife management, promotion of fishing and hunting, and infrastructure that will create green jobs now, while supporting and enhancing sustainable resource-based economies that pay dividends for years to come.

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Investments in fishing and hunting achieve greater fish and wildlife conservation, enhanced social and mental well-being for more than four million Canadians, and fortification of a proven \$11-billion economy. There are few investments the Government of Canada can make that will truly achieve this triple bottom line of social, environmental, and economic sustainability. For a resource-driven country like Canada, enhancing fishing and hunting must be a part of our post-pandemic recovery.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our ideas, and we would be pleased to discuss them with you further.

Yours in Conservation,

Matt DeMille  
Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services

/md  
Attach.

cc: The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard  
Eric Brown, Senior Advisory for External Relations, Great Lakes Commission  
Dave Burden, Director, International Joint Commission  
Mark Fisher, President and CEO, Council of the Great Lakes Region  
Eamonn Horan-Lunney, Director, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
Greg McClinchey, Legislative Liaison, Great Lakes Fishery Commission  
Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director  
OFAH Board of Directors

## **2021 Federal Budget Proposals – Infrastructure Project Descriptions** **(Great Lakes and St. Lawrence focus)**

### **1. Boating Access and Infrastructure Funding**

Angling is a significant economic driver in Canada and Ontario, especially in the Great Lakes and tributaries. In Ontario there are more than 1.2 million licensed anglers that contribute greater than \$2.2 billion annually to the province's economy. With more and better boat launches, adequate docking, and available parking space for vehicles and trailers, governments at all levels will benefit through increased participation in angling (and boating) that brings revenue into many sectors of local economies. As part of this concept, additional amenities could be considered such as boat washing stations (to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species), fueling services, bathroom and fish cleaning facilities, and sustainable infrastructure designs (e.g. permeable pavements). There are existing and successful programs in the U.S. such as the Boating Access Grant Program and the Boating Infrastructure Program that this strategic plan could be modelled after.

**Budget Request:** \$10-20 million/5 years

**Potential Partners:** OFAH, municipalities, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, tourism associations, local angling groups, conservation authorities, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, International Joint Commission.

### **2. Accessible Fishing Grants**

Angling participation has been declining in Ontario, particularly in areas where opportunities to experience the natural environment are limited, such as urban locations common in the Great Lakes basin. Access to the Great Lakes for angling should be fostered for its socio-economic, mental health, and physical health benefits, especially during and after this pandemic. One way this can be achieved is by improving angling access through dedicated recreational fishing areas. Fishing access points can involve the construction of structures such as shoreline nodes and piers (i.e. fixed platforms) to provide safe and accessible fishing areas that will increase outdoor opportunities and direct angling pressure away from undesirable locations. This strategy generates revenue for local businesses, reduces travel by creating nearby fishing opportunities, and can be naturalized and incorporated into habitat restoration projects as demonstrated by the Urban Recreational Fisheries Strategy for the Lake Ontario Northwest Waterfront – Fishing In Your Backyard.

**Budget Request:** \$2-4 million/year

**Potential Partners:** OFAH, municipalities, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, local angling groups, conservation authorities, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

### **3. Great Lakes Aquatic Invasive Species Funding**

**Idea:** Ontario and the Great Lakes must continue to be a focus of Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program. Generally, Ontario has a higher risk of new invasive species entering and becoming established compared to other regions in Canada. And, once established in Ontario, AIS pose a threat to the rest of Canada. Additional funding is needed in the Great Lakes basin to increase DFO's capacity to deliver on the recommendations made in the 2019 Independent Auditor's report, specifically to be effective in preventing and eliminating AIS by targeting the species and pathways with the greatest risk.

**Budget Request:** \$20 million/5 years

**Potential Partners:** OFAH, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, International Joint Commission, Great Lakes Commission, other NGOs (e.g. Ducks Unlimited Canada).



#### **4. Boat Wash Program**

**Idea:** Implement boat washing stations at high traffic boat launches across Ontario to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. For example, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie are known to possess a number of AIS, including, but not limited to, Round Goby, Eurasian water milfoil, water soldier, zebra mussels, spiny waterflea, etc. Most boaters and anglers understand the Clean, Drain, Dry (a voluntary protocol) is the most effective method to mitigate the introduction/spread of invasive species; however, many Great Lakes locations lack infrastructure (i.e., boat wash stations) that supports this behaviour. By establishing permanent boat wash stations at high-risk and high-traffic boat launches (and staffing them via the OFAH Invading Species Hit Squad), this project will help curb the in-land spread of AIS. The goal of implementing this project will be twofold: 1) education through exposure and 2) prevention through action.

**Budget Request:** \$1.5 million

**Potential Partners:** OFAH, municipalities, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, private marinas, Boating Ontario, conservation authorities, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks, International Joint Commission, Great Lakes Commission.

#### **5. Habitat Project Funding**

**Idea:** Funding program(s) to help 1) local agencies (municipalities and conservation authorities), and 2) community groups/NGOs plan and deliver larger strategic local habitat projects, including barrier mitigation (including minor barriers such as perched or undersized culverts), and tree and shrub planting to support bank stabilization, spawning habitat rehabilitation, and invasive species control. For community groups, a restored Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program (federal) and reinvigorated Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Program and/or Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund (provincial), geared to help local agencies and stakeholder groups plan and deliver strategic aquatic habitat restoration projects, would achieve this. Outcomes will be improved habitats and their supporting ecosystems, resulting in increased biodiversity and better recreational fisheries.

**Budget Request:** \$24 million/3 years

**Potential Partners:** Indigenous communities, Conservation authorities, municipalities, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, International Joint Commission, Great Lakes Commission, and provincial and local stakeholder groups as leads. Many partners possible for each individual project.

#### **6. Barrier Mitigation Funding**

**Idea:** Many of Canada's legacy barriers/dams on rivers are failing and responsible for negative impacts on the environment ranging from blocking migratory fishes, thermal pollution, sediment build-up, and poor flood control management. At the same time, barriers can be key to controlling the abundance and spread of aquatic invasive species such as Sea Lamprey. Nowhere is this concern more relevant than Great Lakes tributaries. Funding is required to assess, review, and mitigate barriers to achieve fish passage, invasive species control, and address climate change and flood risks with new, removed and replaced, or mitigated dams as outcomes.

**Budget Request:** \$10 million/3 years

**Potential Partners:** Indigenous communities, conservation authorities and municipalities would be key partners to lead the process, many already have plans and processes initiated, but stalled due to a lack of funding for the planning process. Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, International Joint Commission.