

LANDING CANADA'S FIRST ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LAW



PHOTO: VAL VESA

"This is a long-awaited and hard-fought first step in bringing justice to communities that have suffered a disproportionate burden of environmental risk and have been unfairly excluded from decision-making processes that affect their fundamental rights."

SABAA KHAN, CLIMATE SOLUTIONS DIRECTOR

Congratulations! Your support helped push Canada to pass the Environmental Justice Strategy Act. The Senate completed third reading of Bill C-226 on June 13. It received royal assent on June 20. This new law requires the federal government to examine the links between racialization, socio-economic status and environmental risk, and to develop Canada's first national strategy to assess, prevent and address environmental racism and advance environmental justice.

Environmental racism occurs in Canada and around the world. It's a facet of environmental injustice, and happens when development, policies or practices intentionally or unintentionally result in more pollution or health risks in historically and systemically marginalized communities.

We also see it in patterns of unequal access to environmental benefits such as clean water and air and

proximity to parks. It has serious impacts on health and wellbeing.

A 2020 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights pointed to "a pattern in Canada where marginalized groups, and Indigenous peoples in particular, find themselves on the wrong side of a toxic divide, subject to conditions that would not be acceptable elsewhere in Canada."

Part of reconciling with Canada's colonial past is learning from the historically discriminatory governance patterns that exploited humans and nature. We need to enact legal and societal transformations to end long-standing injustices that disproportionately affect Indigenous and other marginalized and vulnerable communities in Canada.

For more than a decade, the Foundation and our supporters have been advocating for an environmental justice strategy as a human-rights based approach to protecting the environment. This advocacy was essential for building momentum to get this bill to pass. Thanks to you, we submitted nearly 10,000 petition signatures to the Senate committee that studied the bill before its third reading. Senate sponsor Mary Jane McCallum cited our petition and the "groundswell of support externally" for Bill C-226 during the final debate.

REIMAGINING LAWNS AS HABITAT

Traditional turfgrass lawns are important for outdoor recreation and leisure. But they use vast amounts of water and harmful chemicals, take up precious space and provide little ecological value.

Thanks to you, we and our partners launched LawnShare (in French, *Partage ta pelouse*) to help people transform yards, fields and roadsides into healthier environments for wildlife and humans.

LawnShare's research team mapped 10 Canadian cities and showed that between eight and 22 per cent of each is covered in lawns. Toronto has nearly 80 square kilometres — 50 times more area than High Park, one of the city's largest green spaces. Montreal's 97 square kilometres of lawns are about 43 times bigger than Mount Royal Park.

LawnShare is already empowering thousands of individuals, companies and communities to adopt sustainable lawn-care practices. Participants receive a toolkit with how-to tips on better lawn maintenance and habitat creation, regional plant lists and access to educational webinars.

Learn more and download the LawnShare toolkit here: dsfdn.org/lawnshare



PHOTO: TRYNA MCLEAN

DEMANDING AN END TO GAS EXPANSION

"Our elected leaders should not spend one more penny supporting fossil fuel projects. There's a path to a clean economy powered by renewable energy and there's no place for LNG on that path."

SEVERN CULLIS-SUZUKI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PHOTO: PAIGE GORSAK, DOGWOOD BC

On May 8, British Columbia's five largest environmental organizations (including us — thanks to you) delivered 113,987 petition signatures opposing fracking and liquefied natural gas expansion to the British Columbia cabinet. The majority, 76,336 signatures, came from B.C. residents.

Oil and gas executives were meeting nearby for an annual industry-promotion conference. Protesters, including our team, gathered outside to oppose their lethal products and demand a livable, climate-safe planet for all.

Make your voice heard:

- Stop LNG from fuelling climate chaos: dsfdn.org/no-more-lng
- Write a letter to the editor to help counteract misinformation: dsfdn.org/get-published
- Call B.C. cabinet ministers and say you want an end to LNG expansion: dsfdn.org/make-the-call

PROMOTING A PLASTIC-FREE WORLD

You made it possible for our team to advocate for and take part in international negotiations in Ottawa in April to develop a legally binding global treaty on plastic pollution.

You helped them:

- Participate in consultations and meet with the federal government prior to the negotiations.
- Call for an ambitious global treaty to limit plastic production, restrict chemicals of concern and ban non-essential single-use plastics worldwide.
- Make a submission to the federal government with clear recommendations for an effective and fair legally binding instrument.
- Advocate for environmental justice and civil society empowerment, aligning the treaty with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the right to a healthy environment.
- Organize the April 21 march and rally to end the plastic era with the Break Free from Plastics coalition.
- Participate as a panellist in a virtual discussion with international and Canadian legal experts.
- Highlight that global *and* local actions are needed to protect front-line communities.



PHOTO: NAJA BERTOLT JENSEN

Plastic, made from fossil fuels, is a significant source of carbon emissions and pollution and contains numerous toxic substances. Contamination extends to Earth's most remote ecosystems and to many species, including humans.

In Canada, nearly 90 per cent of plastic waste ends up in landfills, incinerators, lakes, parks and the ocean. Recycling systems are dysfunctional worldwide. Canada and other rich countries export the problem to poorer, developing countries.

With your help, we'll keep the pressure up as talks continue in Busan, South Korea, in November.

PROTECTING THE WORLD'S LARGEST GREENBELT

Donors like you have made it possible for us to campaign to safeguard the Ontario Greenbelt since 2008, including standing against Highway 413, a proposed mega-highway.

Most recently, we teamed up with the National Farmers Union Ontario to amplify their voices, through advertising in the *Toronto Star* and social media videos of them speaking out against Hwy 413.

It's working! Polling by EKO's Research shows that more than 80 per cent of Ontarians agree with the farmers' opposition to Highway 413. And 79 per cent want the federal and

provincial governments to put more money into public transit.

If allowed to go ahead, Highway 413 would rip through some of southern Ontario's last remaining countryside, cutting down trees, paving 8.8 million square metres of ground, threatening at-risk species and destroying thousands of hectares of prime agricultural lands that could never be recovered. It will also divert billions of dollars from transit solutions such as electric buses and light rail that could address the climate emergency.

If a mega-highway is allowed to pave over parts of the world's largest



Ontario farmers appeared in ads to raise awareness about the destructive impacts of Highway 413.

protected greenbelt, is any forest or wetland in Canada safe?

Show you support the farmers. Sign our petition: dsfdn.org/stop-413

SPOTLIGHTING A TV “HEARTTHROB” WHO CARES ABOUT CARIBOU

After competing in ABC’s *The Bachelorette* and *Bachelor in Paradise*, Blake Moynes (who comes from Hamilton, Ontario) partnered with us to bring attention to another of his passions: boreal woodland caribou. Blake leveraged his fame and considerable social media following to urge Canada to intervene in caribou conservation in his home province. Audiences loved it.

For more than a decade, the federal government has urged the provinces to align with its boreal caribou recovery strategy. All are failing.

Recent progress reports on measures in Alberta and Ontario show little evidence of caribou habitat protection and restoration. In June,

federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault recommended an emergency decree to protect caribou in Quebec, where 11 out of 13 populations are at risk of extinction.

Habitat loss and logging roads, which shift predator-prey dynamics, are drivers of caribou decline. The provinces are supposed to keep a minimum of 65 per cent of boreal caribou habitat free from industrial disturbance, or restore habitat to a minimum of 65 per cent undisturbed if that threshold has already been crossed. This would also benefit at least 80 other species, including the wolverine and American pine marten, which depend on the boreal forest.



PHOTO: POWERLINE FILMS

Julee Brown, U.S.-based Natural Resources Defense Council boreal partnership manager, and wildlife conservationist Blake Moynes.

Provincial government paralysis on meaningful caribou recovery measures proves that forest industry interests are being prioritized. But caribou can’t survive without a place to live. Speak up for them: dsfdn.org/help-caribou

SEEING THROUGH THE SPIN

Every year, Natural Resources Canada reports on the health of forests throughout the country. But it purposely omits key information to downplay or hide damage done by industrial logging in the boreal forest — one of Earth’s remaining “lungs.” This oversight has huge impacts on biodiversity, climate, forest integrity and ecosystem services.

In January, leading North American environmental organizations (including us!) issued a first-of-its kind joint counter-report. “The State of the Forest in Canada: Seeing Through the Spin” highlights government’s lack of attention to:

- The cumulative impacts of industrial logging on remaining primary and old-growth forests.

- Failures in forest regeneration due to logging infrastructure.
- Population declines of key forest-dependent species such as threatened boreal caribou and the endangered spotted owl.
- Transparent accounting of logging’s emissions footprint.
- The extent to which logging is upholding Canada’s commitment to obtain free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous communities.

This report underscores the stark difference between Canada’s ambitions and the reality on the ground. Thanks to your support, we now have a clearer picture of forest degradation and can call on government to transparently and



PHOTO: TJ WATT

Old-growth logging in Caycuse Watershed, Ditidaht territory, British Columbia, is considered “sustainable forestry.”

comprehensively report on industrial logging’s impacts.

Read the report here: dsfdn.org/state-of-the-forest

HOW TO TALK ABOUT CARBON PRICING

One of the most important things you can do about climate change is talk about it. And one of the most useful climate solutions is carbon pricing. But this solution is often misunderstood, leading to polarizing debates. Here’s what you need to know.

Canada’s carbon levy is designed to increase costs of burning polluting



PHOTO: PRISCILLA DU PREEZ

fossil fuels and encourage people and businesses to change their behaviour and favour cleaner alternatives. For example, a person might switch from a gas-powered vehicle to one that’s electric to avoid paying for gas, which is increasingly expensive.

To ensure it doesn’t create economic hardship, the federal government returns about 90 per cent of the money collected in provinces where it applies to families through quarterly rebate payments. Rural residents get 10 to 20 per cent more to reflect higher energy use. The remaining 10 per cent goes back to businesses, farmers and Indigenous groups to help them reduce emissions.

Evidence shows carbon pricing such as Canada’s works. The government estimates that “carbon pollution pricing will contribute as much as

one-third of Canada’s emissions reductions in 2030.”

It’s true, living costs are rising. But those are affected to a far greater degree by volatile fossil fuel markets, corporate price gouging and supply chain bottlenecks. Climate-related extreme weather events and pollution are also affecting inflation. Many people rely on carbon rebates to help with those, with eight out of 10 Canadians coming out further ahead.

Carbon pricing isn’t the only way to combat accelerating climate change, but it’s one of the most useful in a market system. Combined with other tools and solutions, it will help prevent worsening global heating impacts.

Need tips for having difficult conversations? Our Chatbot can help: dsfdn.org/climate-coach

WIN! ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS IN ACTION

In 2023, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act recognized the right to a healthy environment for the first time in Canadian law — the culmination of a campaign made possible by donors like you, which began in 2014 with David Suzuki’s cross-country Blue Dot Tour.

In May, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault used his authority under CEPA to impose strict benzene controls in pursuit of environmental justice for Aamjiwnaang First Nation and Sarnia, Ontario, saying “Clean air and water are non-negotiables.”

Aamjiwnaang First Nation has been sounding the alarm after community members started falling ill after exposure to high levels of benzene, a cancer-causing chemical. Emissions of benzene from the nearby styrene plant, INEOS Styrolution, in Sarnia, Ontario, frequently exceed air quality standards. Styrene is used to produce certain types of plastic.

This is what environmental justice looks like. Thank you for your help supporting it.



PHOTO: STÉPHANIE HARNOIS

Speakers at the April 21 Break Free from Plastics rally in Ottawa. (More information on Page 3.)

SCORING COMMUNITY GREEN DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Win! When residents speak up, city and town councils listen!

You made it possible for us to support people in Mississauga and Caledon, Ontario, who want to keep their communities green. Our engagement experts connected residents with local partners, built



Top, left to right: volunteers Kenisha Ahuja, Nivedya Sudhir and Ottavia Paluch and organizers Kevin Ayegbe, Chloe Tai, Meshall Awan and Maeve Sharkey, and volunteer Kaneera Uthayakumaran. Bottom, left to right: organizer Divya Arora, volunteer Eleni Sotirakos and organizers Jared Klein and Malkeet Sandhu.

momentum via online petitions and spoke at planning and development meetings.

The City of Mississauga approved green development standards on April 8. On May 14, the Town of Caledon unanimously adopted its standards. Now all municipalities in the Peel Region have them.

Green development standards:

- Help achieve net-zero carbon emissions from all new buildings.
- Require all new development applications to follow strict requirements around energy, green infrastructure and community design.
- Are a major step toward more affordable, livable communities.

Municipalities are key to solving the climate crisis. How we design, construct, manage and power cities and towns in the years ahead will determine our ability to reduce a large part of our emissions globally.

You too can work with your local government to advance climate change solutions in your community. This guide can help: dsfdn.org/your-voice-at-the-table

CATCHING A WIN FOR CHINOOK SALMON

For many years, Chinook salmon bycatch (i.e., fish caught in nets and discarded) has been an issue in the British Columbia groundfish trawl fishery. Chinook salmon are the primary prey species for endangered Salish Sea orcas (a.k.a. southern resident killer whales), Canada's most endangered marine mammal.

Thanks to you, we've been shining a critical light on the problem. We've helped enhance monitoring, improve data availability and transparency and develop new management measures to substantially reduce the Chinook bycatch.

In late 2023, Fisheries and Oceans Canada released a report showing that Chinook bycatch was increasing in the B.C. trawl fishery, with 96 per cent of the trawl bycatch coming from the midwater fishery. For 2024, our team contributed to new management measures, including a fleetwide cap and individual vessel limits on Chinook bycatch. These are the first limits on the number of Chinook that can be unintentionally caught in this fishery. We also pushed Fisheries and Ocean Canada to commit to continue funding its enhanced salmon bycatch monitoring program.



PHOTO: PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL LABORATORY

This is an amazing win, but much more needs to be done to protect Chinook salmon. Please send a letter to elected officials and demand an end to open-net fish farms in B.C. waters: dsfdn.org/end-fish-farm

Finding Solutions

A publication of the David Suzuki Foundation, a registered Canadian charity working to protect the diversity of nature and our quality of life, now and for the future.

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As one of Canada's most trusted environmental organizations, it's no surprise that people call or write us every day. As the climate crisis accelerates, it's more important than ever to keep the conversation going. Here are our experts' responses to a few common comments.



Thomas Green
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COMMENT: I HEARD CANADA ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY ABOUT ONE PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS.

RESPONSE FROM STEPHEN AND THOMAS: Although Canada may account for about one per cent of global emissions, we have the third-highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita. That means the average person in Canada pollutes more than most of the world.

Because many greenhouse gases remain in the atmosphere for long periods of time, historic emissions also matter. Canada is a top 10 historic carbon dioxide emitter, adding to our responsibility to be among the first countries to decarbonize.

We also have some of the largest oil reserves in the world. Not only is the oil and gas industry responsible for 31 per cent of this country's emissions, when our coal, gas and oil is exported and burned abroad, it results in emissions equivalent to 1.3 times Canada's national emissions!

We have a huge responsibility to people in Canada and around the world. We must reduce harmful fossil fuel pollution, stop expanding fossil fuel production and commit to a sustainable future.

COMMENT: WE NEED TO BUILD MORE NUCLEAR. IT'S THE CHEAPEST WAY TO DECARBONIZE.

RESPONSE FROM STEPHEN AND THOMAS: As a science-based organization we applaud work from folks unlocking solutions that help us decarbonize. But we need a rapid, affordable, reliable energy transformation.

We have proven technologies needed for the transition to zero emissions — renewable energy, energy storage and energy efficiency — and we can add more transmission lines between provinces. Wind and solar are also the cheapest forms of electricity in history, far cheaper — and safer — than new nuclear power generation. We need a transition that can work for workers, communities and the environment. We don't need to wait for miracle technologies to make this transition possible. We need to build the people power and the political will to get it done.

COMMENT: WILDFIRES ARE CAUSED BY HUMANS, NOT CLIMATE CHANGE.

RESPONSE FROM JODI: Forest fires can be caused by humans or lightning strikes, but climate change creates the conditions that make fires more likely and more severe. Consider how quick it is to start a bonfire with tinder-dry wood and how much coaxing it takes to get one going when the wood is even slightly damp. Climate change increases the likelihood of hotter, drier summer conditions that make it easier for fires (regardless of what sparked them) to grow and spread quickly.

That's part of why it's so important to address climate change and take steps to prevent and effectively manage forest fires.

IGNITING THE GREAT GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Under our global economic system, most people don't hold the reins of power, even in democracies. The system encourages massive accumulation and concentration of wealth and power.

It makes no sense.

A study by Carbon Majors Database researchers found that just 57 corporate and state-controlled oil, gas, coal and cement companies have been linked to 80 per cent of the world's fossil carbon dioxide emissions since the 2016 Paris climate agreement. Oxfam found that the world's five richest men have more than doubled their wealth since 2020 — at a rate of US\$14 million per hour! — while at least five billion people worldwide became poorer.

Most people are too consumed with trying to survive and make ends

meet as living costs rise and working life becomes harder to pay much attention. Those amassing obscene wealth want to keep it that way, especially those in deadly enterprises like fossil fuel exploitation. They buy politicians and media to promote their interests and fool the public into thinking everything is fine.

We're on a collision course. The only ones truly benefiting are the very rich, and even they won't thrive on a dying planet. Transforming not just our energy and economic systems but also our ways of thinking will benefit the vast majority of the world's people, not to mention all the other life forms that share the planet.

We must all do our part to cut consumption and energy use and reduce waste. The most important step is to get involved, get informed and push for better ways.

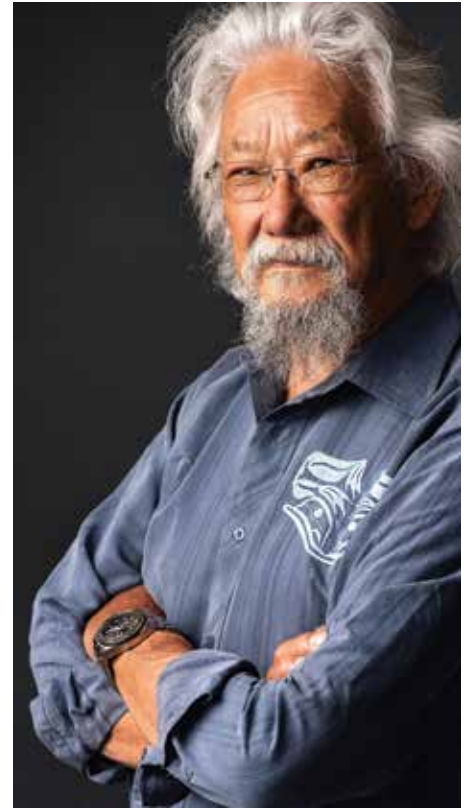


PHOTO: JENNIFER ROESSLER



TOP THREE THINGS TO HELP PREPARE YOUR WILL

Writing or updating a will often gets dropped to the bottom of the to-do list. But it's actually fairly straightforward. Here are three tips to get you started:

1. **Get professional help.** Ask about estate services at your bank or call your lawyer or financial adviser.
2. **Involve family.** Discuss heirlooms and other valuable items. The rest will make up the "residue" of your estate, which can be gifted to loved ones and/or favourite charities.
3. **Choose how to make it.** Ask a lawyer. Try an online will. Or use a DIY will kit.

Have any questions? Reach out to us at legacy@davidsuzuki.org