

# CANADA'S TOWARDS OCEANS 2020

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June 8, 2018 - World Ocean Day

## Beyond 2020: Open Letter on Ocean Priorities for the Canadian Government

**In** December 2017, over 30 of Canada's most respected, passionate and informed marine communicators, scientists, Indigenous representatives, artists and storytellers came together at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto for an event called *Canada's Oceans: Towards 2020*. The event was public facing and included over 600 people. After the two-day public event the 30+ leaders, including representatives from Parks Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, met privately to craft a vision for Canada's oceans with the goal of confirming Canada's identity as an **ocean nation**. The signatories of this Open Letter recognize and applaud the Canadian Government for their leadership and progress thus far on our ocean protection commitments, including recent announcements and revisions to the Fisheries Act. There is still more work to do, and it is our goal with this Letter to prioritize and contextualize next steps.

The public mandates of Canada's Ministers have offered Canadians and Indigenous peoples an opportunity to hold government accountable and to engage collaboratively in ensuring mandates are met. For our ocean, this has meant a reinvestment in science, commitment to international protection targets and incorporation of climate change into stock assessments and ongoing efforts to modernize Canada's legal framework for managing our fisheries and oceans.

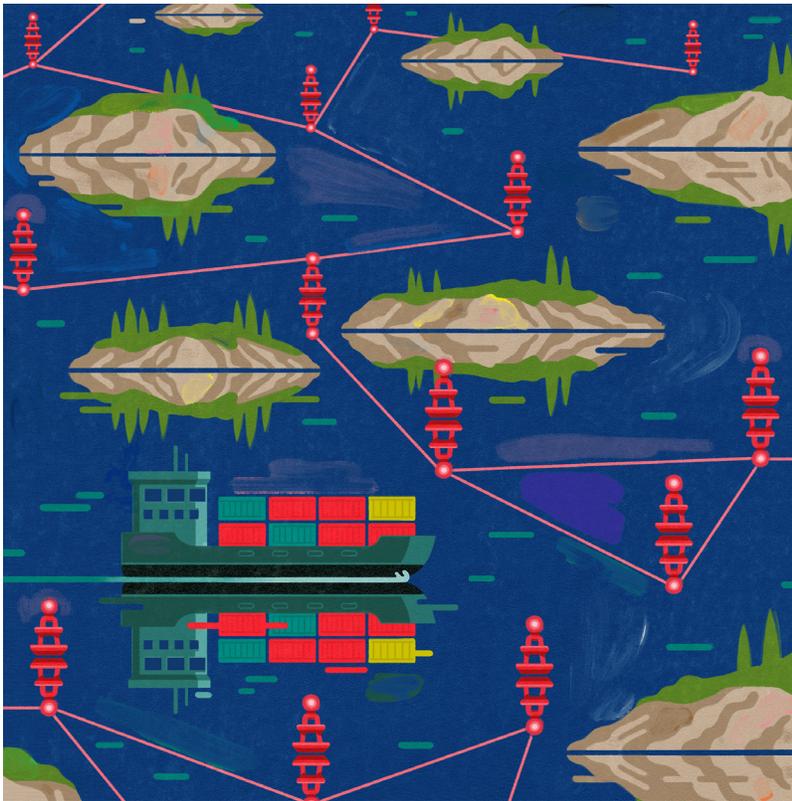
Charting a course for an increased and consistent focus on our ocean will ensure that reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and a commitment to sustainable oceans are interlinked priorities. While Canada has returned to the global stage on a number of important issues, it is increasingly important that we ensure that our efforts at home reflect our ambitions for the rest of the world. We outline 5 areas of focus and provide specific examples of concrete actions we hope to see taken by diverse interests, including government:



## **Continued and increased support of Indigenous leadership on oceans,**

through examples like the conservation of Tallurutiup Imanga in the Arctic, Imappivut in Labrador, and the Marine Planning Partnership on the west coast, is needed. A commitment to meaningful co-governance and shared management of our oceans, with legitimate nation-to-nation relationships should be the guiding principle in this continued work. Reconciliation efforts need to result in power and resources as well as a commitment to upholding and implementing land claims and treaties. This includes ensuring sustainable fisheries, sharing knowledge and shared research agendas. Conservation efforts need to be effective in meeting goals to protect ecosystems, Indigenous access and use of the marine ecosystem.

**Action:** Convening of an Indigenous Oceans Conference that provides space for indigenous peoples to move forward with an oceans agenda and for non-Indigenous participants to listen and learn.



## Establish networks of conserved and strongly protected areas:

Canada has made progress in meeting international targets of 10% protection by 2020 of its marine and coastal areas. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that there are networks of interconnected areas that provide marine biodiversity protection and resilience in the face of climate change and increasing impacts of human uses. Such networks will ensure connectivity between species and marine habitats and will provide a more holistic view of marine conservation. Ideally these networks are situated with broader scale marine planning, where deemed appropriate to address conflict of use (i.e. between offshore wind and fishing, shipping and marine mammal corridors).

**Action:** By 2020, networks of conserved and protected areas should be determined for all three oceans, with implementation of these networks achieved by 2030.

**Action:** Building on its past record of international oceans leadership, Canada should take a championship role in upcoming negotiations on a new international treaty to protect high seas biodiversity which once in place would help ensure connectivity and compatibility with marine protection measures within our national waters.



## **Commit to rebuilding and sustaining our fisheries:**

Fisheries provide livelihoods and food security for coastal communities as well as inland populations. Our history is founded on the ability of our oceans to supply food, yet at the same time the present and future states of our oceans may not be able to rebuild or sustain what oceans have produced in the past. The restoration and modernization of Canada's Fisheries Act through the proposed Bill C-68 represents a significant step towards achieving fish and fish habitat protection goals. As part of implementing this new Act, a concerted and meaningful effort by Canada to rebuild fish populations and meet the Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi Target 6 by 2020 is needed. We must simultaneously invest in science that enables a transparent ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in the face of a changing climate – where we are accounting for the needs of the marine food web, and not just economic benefits from the fisheries resources we extract from the ocean.

**Action:** Community engagement on these issues on all three coasts is imperative so that economic development desires are tempered with ecological reality.

**Action:** Canada establish a plan to report on progress towards meeting indicators and overall goals of Aichi Target 6.

**Action:** Canada develops and implements an Ecosystem-Based approach to fisheries.



## Take action on reducing plastic pollution:

The United Nations has signaled the end to single-use plastics and reduced emissions of plastic pollution from land and sea. Canada has committed to plastic reduction through signing the Sustainable Development Goal 14 on Oceans as well as signing on to the United Nations Environment Program Clean Seas initiative. Yet, according to the OECD's latest report on Canada, Canadians produce more garbage per capita than any other OECD nation. At the same time, plastic is making its way into our water, oceans and seafood. Canadian scientists are well poised to help further research and make recommendations on how Canada and Canadian industry can work together to reduce the impact of plastic on our natural environments. These initiatives should be linked to national plans to reduce waste and the use of fossil fuels.

**Action:** Canada needs to develop a National Plastics Framework and take a leadership role on international efforts to set targets for reduction of plastic use and related emissions.

**Action:** The government of Canada and its provinces and territories as well as Indigenous communities need to make progress on the 2009 commitment by Council of Canadian Ministers of Environment to implement Extended Producer Responsibility to reduce plastic pollution and divert plastic from the waste stream.



## **Communication, Outreach & Advocacy – ocean literacy:**

As an ocean nation, and to achieve meaningful co-governance with Indigenous Peoples, have strong marine protection networks, rebuilt fisheries, an Ecosystem-Based Management system for fisheries, and a reduction in pollution emissions (e.g., plastics) – Canada needs to use all available tools and invest in new ones to increase ocean literacy. Together with partners, Canada needs an overarching oceans communication strategy, across multiple platforms. Investments are being made in science communication, yet there is a need for overarching shared messaging to ensure public support for broad based ocean protection actions.

**Action:** Collaborate across government, Indigenous, private and non-profit sectors to develop outreach projects, programs, and funding streams that leverage Canadian talent to help position Canada as an ocean nation.

**Action:** Adopt shared messaging and principles for ocean literacy, and support the emerging National Ocean Literacy Coalition, and their associated draft ocean literacy plan.

**Action:** Ensure ocean literacy and conservation priorities are included in all K-12 curriculum systems in all provinces, territories, and Indigenous communities.

We see these 5 areas of focus and associated examples of concrete actions as a logical, needed, and appropriate next step toward propelling Canada into an international leadership role on ocean protection. We are prepared to assist the Government in realizing this ambition and look forward to your response.



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