

# Impact Assessment Act needs to do more to safeguard nature

OTTAWA, CANADA, February 15, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The government of Canada missed an important opportunity to make the legislative changes needed through Bill C-69 to shift Canada significantly toward a more sustainable future.

This country's ecological systems are increasingly threatened by carbon pollution, with sea-ice disappearing, every sub-watershed in the country already impacted by climate change and half of monitored vertebrate wildlife in serious decline.

The Impact Assessment Act takes some steps toward safeguarding the health of ecological systems by restoring some oversight, but must go further toward reducing political influence and require that project approvals or rejections are based directly on the impact on Canada's carbon reduction targets.

## On climate targets

WWF-Canada is encouraged to see that, under the act, the government must take into account the impact assessments to determine whether the adverse effects of a project are in the public interest. The legislation requires that, when determining public interest, the government must consider the extent to which a project contributes to sustainability and the extent to which it hinders or contributes to Canada's ability to meet climate change commitments. There is no language in the current legislation, however, that explicitly requires the rejection of projects not in alignment with Canada's international commitments to limit global warming to 1.5C because they are outside the public interest, in recognition that climate change is an existential and economic threat above all others.

## On regional and strategic impact assessments

To address cumulative impacts, decision-making on major projects must be guided by both strategic and regional environmental assessments. To achieve the goal of sustainable development, these assessments must be:

Quickly completed before more energy decisions are made locking Canada into a more carbon-intensive future.

Enshrined through amended legislation as central to the decision-making process on projects.

## On decision-making

Decision-making should be based on the findings of integrated, tiered regional and strategic environmental assessments, rather than being left to ministerial discretion.



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Without concrete language requiring that timely decision-making is based on the best available science and traditional ecological knowledge, ecosystem health and resiliency risks being undermined by short-term political interests.

We look forward to learning more about future legislation stipulating which projects will be subject to impact assessments, particularly given the fact the new Canadian Energy Regulator will maintain adjudicative responsibility for projects not currently on the designated project list. We welcome the government's invitation to provide feedback.

#### On transparency

Public interest is best served by using science to make evidence-based decisions. WWF-Canada is pleased to see increased transparency throughout the impact assessment process.

Megan Leslie, president and CEO of World Wildlife Fund Canada, says:

“Given the environmental and economic impacts of climate change across Canada and around the world, carbon pollution must be the driving factor in whether projects are approved or dismissed. Canadians want to make the transition to a carbon-free economy and want the government to put the physical and legal infrastructures in place to make that happen. Our ability to meet international climate targets while limiting disruption to the Canadian economy demands clear language enshrining Canada's climate commitments as the key priority when determining public interest and explicitly requiring project approval be dependent on carbon reduction targets.”

#### About World Wildlife Fund Canada

WWF-Canada creates solutions to the environmental challenges that matter most for Canadians. We work in places that are unique and ecologically important, so that nature, wildlife and people thrive together. Because we are all wildlife. For more information, visit [wwf.ca](http://wwf.ca).

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