



May 11, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
 Prime Minister of Canada
 Office of the Prime Minister and Privy Council
 Parliament Buildings
 Ottawa ON K1A 1A6

Hold Strong on Environmental Laws

Dear Prime Minister,

The undersigned commend you for the tremendous efforts your government is making to protect Canadians from the health, social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also appreciate the progress your government continues to make towards achieving environmental commitments, such as the introduction of climate accountability (net-zero) legislation, implementation of Pathway to Canada Target One and modernization of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA).

We are writing to urge you to hold strong, and resist pressures to weaken or delay implementation of federal environmental laws. Fast-tracking of oil and gas and other resource development projects under the guise of a COVID-19 response would be short-sighted and undermine recovery efforts towards building a resilient economy and a cleaner, healthier future for Canadians.

The leaked March 27, 2020 Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers’ (CAPP) memo uses the COVID-19 crisis as a pretext for reversing your government’s efforts to reduce Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions and advance the transition to a greener Canadian economy. We are particularly concerned about CAPP’s call for a ‘COVID-19 Market Crisis Joint Working Group.’ Any such working group addressing economic recovery must have proportionate representation from Indigenous, environmental and human rights groups to help ensure that COVID-19 recovery measures put Canada’s economy on a more sustainable, climate-friendly path and that no Canadians are left behind, advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and respect UNDRIP.

CAPP and several industry allies employed a similar tactic in 2011 when they wrote to federal ministers calling for weaker environmental assessment laws and regulation of the energy

industry. Within months, Parliament enacted Bill C-38, an omnibus budget bill that gutted many of Canada's most important environmental laws.

As you know, public opposition to Bill C-38 was widespread, with tens of thousands of Canadians signing petitions and demonstrating to protest the erosion of federal environmental safeguards. Your government's legislation to restore those safeguards requires determined ongoing implementation if the renewed laws are to meet their potential to generate transformative economic, social and environmental benefits.

Federal environmental laws provide important opportunities as Canada navigates this public health crisis. The *Impact Assessment Act*, *Canadian Energy Regulator Act*, *Fisheries Act* amendments, and *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*, all enacted in the last Parliament, as well as CEPA and the *Species at Risk Act* provide essential forums for public dialogue on the direction and shape of Canada's post-pandemic economy. These laws enable public discourse about what types of projects and activities Canadians want in their communities, how adverse impacts can be mitigated or avoided, and how a healthy and sustainable future can be achieved.

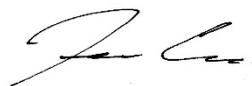
Now more than ever Canadians need strong, rigorously implemented environmental laws to protect their health and build a resilient, sustainable economy. We therefore urge you to reject calls to weaken or bypass these environmental safeguards.

Canadians continue to strongly support implementation of federal environmental laws in the most effective manner possible so that we emerge from this dark time towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

Sincerely,



Graham Saul
Executive Director, Nature Canada



Jessica Clogg
Executive Director and Senior Counsel,
West Coast Environmental Law



Devon Page
Executive Director, Ecojustice Canada Society



Tim Gray
Executive Director, Environmental Defence



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Lucy McRae
Director, Douglas Channel Watch

Cc: Cabinet ministers