



environmental  
defence

# ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE **Strategic Plan**

**2022-2025**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

We extend our respect to all Indigenous Peoples for their valuable past and present contributions to this land. We acknowledge the waters, air, lands and resources that continue to create safe space for our gatherings, our workplaces and homes. And, we recognize and respect the importance of Indigenous leadership in protecting and stewarding the land.

## **Thanks to Our Supporters Who Make This Work Possible**

We would also like to thank our donors, staff, volunteer board and supporters. Everything we do is made possible by your generosity, passion, and dedication. You inspire us to continue our work to build a better future for the environment and for all people in Canada.

## A Letter from our President & Chair and Executive Director

There are times when it can feel challenging to hold onto hope for curbing climate change, reversing biodiversity loss and creating a healthier environment for everyone. But when you see hundreds of community members take part in a “Harvest Walk” to protest a proposed highway that would cut through Ontario’s beloved Greenbelt, hope returns. Hope grows when you see orders piling up for electric vehicles at an ever faster pace. And hope leads you to feel that change at the necessary scale **is** possible when you see world leaders embrace ambitious climate and nature conservation goals and begin to allocate the resources needed to achieve them.

At Environmental Defence, our hope grows from the tremendous support we have seen from individual supporters and institutional donors in the past few years. People no longer accept arguments that we have to choose between a livable environment and economic “prosperity” on issues like traffic congestion, housing supply, clean energy and jobs. It is inspiring! They know that this is a false dichotomy. They know that Environmental Defence’s efforts to reduce the country’s climate footprint, to protect natural lands and waters, to get toxic chemicals out of products and the broader environment, and to help create healthier communities for everyone represent the only path forward. This growing support has made us one of Canada’s most respected environmental leaders.

But we can and will do more. **We understand that we need to reach more people in Canada with our plans for change, to ensure that these plans are inclusive, fair and equitable.** Marginalized communities that too often bear a disproportionate burden of pollution, poor urban design and climate related weather damage. We must ensure that these communities are respected and engaged with, to better understand the harms they experience. Canada’s new clean economy can offer opportunities to reduce or remediate local pollution,



access new clean energy jobs, and offer to redress the past planning mistakes that denied communities access to amenities like green spaces and good public transit.

**That is why we are focusing the next three years around the importance of creating a more inclusive movement for change that addresses the barriers faced by those who often feel they are left out or left behind by current environmental initiatives.** Our new strategic plan outlines how we intend to work harder to include people from all walks of life and all backgrounds in our efforts to take Canada forward to a greener future.

We will continue to be the highly informed and highly effective change making organization we have been, and will work to connect more people with our efforts to create a healthier, cleaner and more sustainable future that is also equitable, just and accessible for all.

It’s an ambitious plan, but we know we can achieve it with your continued support.

Yours in solidarity,

**FATIMA CRERAR**  
President & Chair

&

**TIM GRAY**  
Executive Director

# OUR THREE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

---

Environmental Defence is one of Canada's leading environmental advocacy organizations. We work with government, industry and individuals to defend clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities.



Over the next three years, our strategic goals will remain the same: to increase Canada's ambition on climate change, reform the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, bring an end to plastic pollution, and protect Ontario's natural heritage, water bodies and communities. But as you'll see below, we are committed to doing our work in new ways to reach and benefit more people.

Our 2022-2025 strategic plan is built on the understanding that environmental issues overlap with issues of social justice, equity and opportunity. To ensure that we help people from all walks of life act on their concerns about the environment and climate change, we are putting more effort into incorporating the principles of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) across all areas of our work.

Indigenous, racialized, and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change, industrial pollution, and environmental contaminants. Therefore, we need to do more to

address their urgent needs for restoration, justice, and a healthy future. That is why we are working to secure the swift passage and implementation of federal toxics and environmental justice laws and are advocating to hold both government and industry accountable for their actions in places like the Tar Sands of Alberta.

Our Theory of Change is that it will take action by both individual and collective voices to steer Canada down the path to a safe and healthy future. That is why it is so important that our work be inclusive and empowering, and that it addresses real needs and concerns. We want to give people in every community the tools they need to make positive changes, both in their neighbourhoods and for our planet.

You can see this commitment reflected in our updated vision statement.



**OUR VISION:**

A future where everyone in Canada can live and thrive in a healthy environment – protected for generations to come.



We launched a volunteer program to address the appetite of those concerned about environmental issues and move them beyond “clicktivism.”

## Building a Strong Foundation

An organization needs to be strong and resilient to be able to seize campaign opportunities and respond to unforeseen events. At Environmental Defence, our growing and engaged supporter community is the foundation from which we will build a stronger and larger monthly donor base. We need to find innovative ways to steward our loyal and growing base of major donors and foundations as well as investigate, test and implement new strategies to attract new donors.



By 2025, we aspire to have the funding to create both a reserve fund for unforeseen situations and an innovation fund to enable the development and initial execution of new programs.

## Building More Resonant Messages and Connecting with Diverse Communities

We can't make change happen without an engaged and supportive community. But too often environmental advocacy is inaccessible because of a lack of awareness and barriers to participate. Therefore, we need better ways of connecting in an era where the ways we communicate are constantly shifting, message spaces are crowded, noisy and often more distracting than informative, and people are becoming increasingly trapped in echo chambers that prevent access to diverse voices.

We want to deepen our engagement with our followers while diversifying our messages and the audiences we connect with. To achieve this, we will place a stronger emphasis on message testing, audience identification, understanding public motivations and interests, and communicating with a broader spectrum of society.

We also want to address the appetite of those concerned about environmental issues and move them beyond "clicktivism." That's why we launched a volunteer program to provide opportunities for deeper action on the work we do. We will also hold more events with a focus on the overlap between environment and other social issues.

We will actively look at barriers that hinder the effectiveness of reaching diverse communities using our current communications – whether that is language, accessibility or better understanding where our audiences get their information.

## Securing Canada's Environmental Future

We are focusing our environmental advocacy on five areas where we believe our existing deep policy knowledge and campaign momentum coupled with some new approaches will result in meaningful and lasting change:

- 1 ending climate change
- 2 protecting Ontario's environment
- 3 ending plastic pollution
- 4 safeguarding Canada's Great Lakes
- 5 kicking out toxic chemicals

### 1 Ending Climate Change

Our climate campaign is multi-pronged and includes efforts to end government funding for fossil fuels while working to advance new emissions reducing technologies, such as renewable energy and electric vehicles.

We will continue to work to get the federal government to keep its commitment to end subsidies for fossil fuel production and we will closely monitor its efforts to cap emissions from the oil and gas industry – the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. We will also be pushing for new rules to require climate risk disclosure and net-zero plans from federally regulated financial institutions. Together these actions will ensure Canadians do not have their savings used to support risky – and climate damaging – fossil fuel investments.

We will also be calling on both the federal and Alberta governments to make the fossil fuel industry fully responsible for its toxic tailings legacy, while ensuring proposals for cleaning up these massive sites are scientifically sound and supported by Indigenous nations that will be affected by any releases.

We will continue to work to get the federal government to keep its commitment to end subsidies for fossil fuel production and we will closely monitor its efforts to cap emissions.



Building on the federal government's recent announcement of a proposed zero-emissions vehicle mandate which will require that by 2035 that all cars, SUVs and pickup trucks sold in Canada are electric, we will ensure the federal government follows through with this key measure to make electric vehicles more affordable and readily available in all provinces.

Importantly, we will approach all of this work on ending climate change through the lens of a Just Transition to ensure that current fossil fuel workers and the communities they live in have the ability to participate fully in a new green economy and that these communities have the support they need to make a positive transition as well. Understanding the perspective of workers and communities will be critical to this work.





## 2 Protecting Ontario's Environment

The link between car-dependent sprawl and risks to our climate and future prosperity has been brought home to the people of Ontario by the provincial government's actions to undermine the protection of the Greenbelt, roll back urban planning and environmental protection rules, and build unnecessary highways.

Urban planning can seem like an obscure issue to many, but we have been able to communicate in clear terms why it matters. Exposing the Ontario government's move to make it easier to build car-dependant sprawl, which is leading to more highways, more emissions and more damage to agricultural and natural areas is motivating people to take note and action. We will continue to present a different vision of communities that are more walkable, public transit-

supportive, and where you can live, work and experience nature.

Working with a wide array of community groups, we will defend the right of municipalities to adopt sensible planning approaches to keep development – especially housing – centered in existing urban areas. We will collaborate to stop destructive highways such as the proposed Highway 413.

We will also work with municipal allies to stop the expansion of polluting gas-fired power plants and call for climate-friendly and financially attractive solutions like renewable power, electricity storage and energy efficiency. If we are going to electrify our communities, we have to start building a robust zero-carbon power system today.



### 3 Ending Plastic Pollution

Canada has taken a first step toward curbing the tidal wave of plastic waste that is contaminating our land and flowing into our waters. It has banned six common single-use plastic items and shown that with the right policy and incentives, more sustainable alternatives can take their place.

But we are still a long way from achieving the official government goal of zero plastic waste by 2030. We will work with governments to get us to this important goal and watch closely to ensure that false solutions preferred by the oil industry – like allowing greater incineration of plastics – are rejected.



### 4 Safeguarding Canada's Great Lakes

The four Great Lakes bordering Ontario provide millions of people with drinking water, recreational opportunities and food. We need to take better care of these inland seas, and we can start by reducing polluting agricultural runoff and sewage outflows that create noxious algal blooms, especially as lake waters are warmed by climate change.

We will also continue to oppose Enbridge's plan to continue operating the dangerous Line 5 oil pipeline, which runs through the straits linking Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

Their plan to rebuild rather than retire this aging pipeline is just asking for trouble at one of the most sensitive points of the Great Lakes system.

### 5 Kicking Out Toxic Chemicals

No one wants to be exposed to toxic chemicals when handling a sales receipt or buying a personal care product. That's why we are fighting for major reform to key toxics legislation – *the Canadian Environmental Protection Act* – to increase the transparency of product labeling and to reduce the use of toxic chemicals in both workplaces and products. Meanwhile, we are asking grocery chains to voluntarily and immediately end the use of receipts containing toxic BPA.

Knowing that marginalized communities are often more heavily exposed to industrial emissions, we will also be addressing the problem of toxic local environments through actions like supporting the passage of the passage of Bill C-226, Canada's first environmental racism legislation.



# MOVING FORWARD

---

We have reached critical tipping points on issues like climate change, biodiversity loss and pollutants in our environment. We must make changes now to avoid a future of unchecked climate damage, severely weakened natural systems and an increasingly toxic environment. Fortunately, we do have the means to make these changes, whether that is ramping up renewable energy or protecting Canada's wild places and urban green spaces. Environmental Defence is working hard to build momentum toward a better and more equitable future with smart campaigns to create the change we need.

Your continued support makes our success possible.





environmental  
defence

# ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE **Strategic Plan**

**2022-2025**

**Environmental Defence is a leading Canadian environmental advocacy organization that works with government, industry and individuals to defend clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities.**

For over 35 years, Environmental Defence has worked at the municipal, provincial and federal level to safeguard our freshwater, create livable communities, decrease exposure to toxic chemicals, end plastic pollution, tackle climate change and build a clean economy.

Supporters like you are helping us build a better future for all.

Join us at [environmentaldefence.ca](https://environmentaldefence.ca)