Briefing in Support of Bill C-69

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In my April 23 testimony I reference several studies that I have lead or co-authored. In this briefing note I include citations and top-line conclusions of each paper:

1) **Canada’s environmental policies matter.** Canada is one of the most ecologically important countries on Earth. As the second-largest nation by land area, our country encompasses massive a massive share of Earth’s biodiversity (Coristine et al. 2019). When we allow our ecosystems to be degraded or destroyed, the consequences are globally significant.

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1** reprinted from Coristine et al. 2019: Contributions by country to global ecosystem values. The 8 largest countries (right-most bar), representing >50% of global land area, are ranked for their contribution to 5 ecosystem values. Values include: Wilderness, freshwater, continental shelf, important bird area, soil carbon.

2) **Species at risk in Canada rarely recover.** In a 2014 study, we tallied up all species that had been assessed more than once by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife In Canada (COSEWIC, the science body tasked with assessing the at-risk status of Canadian species, Favaro et al. 2014). A key quote from the paper: “Of 369 species that met our criteria for examination, 115 deteriorated, 202 remained unchanged, and 52 improved in status. Only 20 species (5.4%) improved to the point where they were ‘not at risk’, and five of those were due to increased sampling efforts rather than an increase in population size.”
3) **Canada is losing fish habitat – and these impacts are being legally authorized.** We investigated authorizations issued under the Fisheries Act, obtained via ATIP (Favaro and Olszynski 2017). Of 78 projects, 67% were authorized to impact (that is, harmfully alter, disrupt, or destroy) more fish habitat area than proponents were required to compensate for.

4) **Canadians are very rarely prosecuted for destroying fish habitat.** In a 2012 study, I combed through conviction records from a period spanning 2007 to 2011 for any instance of Canadians being convicted for violating the prohibition on harmfully altering, disrupting, or destroying fish habitat (Favaro et al. 2012). I found that there were only 21 such convictions, during a period in which 1283 convictions for various fisheries violations occurred. It is unlikely that no habitat loss was in fact occurring, therefore this finding suggests that for whatever reason (whether due to poor enforcement, or an issue with the law) habitat destruction was going unpunished.

5) **An overwhelming majority of Canadians support conservation of species – even if it costs them.** A representative poll conducted by Ipsos, and commissioned by myself and a team of scientists, found: “The respondents were strongly committed to species conservation in principle (89% agree), including the need to limit industrial development (80% agree). There was less support for limiting private property rights (63% agree), and more uncertainty when scenarios suggested potential loss of property rights and industry-based jobs.” (McCune et al. 2017)

![Figure 2, reprinted from McCune et al (2017): Responses to each survey question by survey version. Response is as follows: 1—strongly disagree, 2—somewhat disagree, 3—neither agree nor disagree, 4—somewhat agree, 5—strongly agree. Questions were framed two ways (through a “conservation” lens, and through a “utilitarian” lens that downplayed importance of conservation) to determine whether results were robust. Full details in paper.](image)

While the above papers did not investigate environmental assessment specifically, they either demonstrated Canada’s ecological importance to the world (1), called attention to the threats facing Canada’s living resources (2–4), or showed Canadian’s support for preserving those resources. Any amendments to Bill C-69 should consider these realities – that Canada’s ecosystems need protecting, and that Canadians value such protection.
References


