

## MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release

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### **Another suite of cuts to DFO: SeaBlue Canada questions how reductions can coexist with promises to protect Canada's ocean**

*Cuts predominantly affect experts working on species at risk, marine conservation, habitat protection and restoration*

SeaBlue Canada, a coalition of Canadian environmental organizations, is raising concerns about new cuts to the public service that will affect the government's ability to protect our oceans.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) recently made a \$100-million reduction to its staff and programs, predominantly targeting scientists and other experts working on species at risk and marine conservation on Canada's Atlantic coast. This follows an already drastic trim to the public service in January 2026 that affected more than 180 experts.

In contrast, the federal Nature Strategy ("A Force of Nature"), released by the Prime Minister on March 31, 2026, promises that Canada will protect 30 per cent of its lands and waters by 2030. The \$3.8-billion strategy lays out a pathway, among other measures, to protect nature and finalize the remaining 14.5 per cent of marine protected areas needed to meet its target, several of which fall under DFO's suite of responsibilities.

Further, the Government of Canada recently announced that it will host the 12th Our Ocean Conference next year. As the country prepares to take the world stage at an event showcasing conservation and blue economy initiatives, these cuts will significantly impact Canada's reputation as a leader in ocean science, sustainable management of ocean resources, and nature protection.

SeaBlue Canada members question how the successful implementation of the Nature Strategy can co-exist with such drastic cuts to the parts of the civil service responsible for its delivery.

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada released a statement last week flagging the incoherence between the ambition of the Nature Strategy and the workforce and program cuts.

The cuts come against a background of increased pressure to privatize funding of nature and protected areas, as well as a proposal to roll back environmental regulations to quicken the development of major industrial projects.

Statements from members:

"Removing government scientists will weaken local expertise, putting our coastal economy and our way of life at risk. These cuts to marine conservation expose the growing gap between our leaders' values and actions. Our communities, fisheries, and tourism sector rely on a healthy ocean, sustained by evidence-based decisions."

Tanya Edwards, Executive Director, CPAWS Newfoundland and Labrador

"Canada has made significant commitments to protecting our environment while also growing our economy, and we need dedicated, knowledgeable civil servants to achieve our goals. We still have almost 13% of our ocean to protect as we navigate challenges such as increased shipping and new industries like offshore wind that will require monitoring and assessment. Canada was a leader on the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the world is watching to see how Canada shows up."

Susanna Fuller, VP Conservation and Projects, Oceans North

"The recent A Force of Nature funding announcement demonstrated that Canada remains committed to protecting our oceans, but this funding won't be enough if the people who do conservation work are no longer employed. The loss of institutional knowledge is coming at a key junction in Canada's ability to protect our oceans by 2030. Canada has the potential to be a leader on ocean conservation, if only we could stop getting in our own way."

- Julia Laforge, Policy and Campaign Manager, Nature Canada

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