After the Harper decade, Canadians no longer feel that they can trust their federal government to protect their best interests when it comes to the environment. A Liberal government will undo the damage done by the Harper Conservatives and give to our children and grandchildren a country even more beautiful, sustainable, and prosperous than the one we have now.

Our plan will build a better country, a sustainable economy, and give hard-working Canadians a fair shot at success. We will improve Canadians’ quality of life: the air we breathe, the water we drink, the parks and beaches where our children play.

That means investing in the protection of our oceans – the health of which is critical to safeguarding our environment and growing our economy. Our plan will help fish stocks recover, support eco-tourism, protect coastlines from erosion, ensure ecological integrity, and protect species at risk. We will restore Canada’s reputation as a leader in ocean science, strengthen our laws and regulations, and give communities more say in how we manage our oceans.

A Liberal government will:

1. Meet our international commitment to protect marine and coastal areas

In 2010, under the International Convention on Biodiversity, Canada along with numerous other countries committed to meet the Aichi Biodiversity Targets to protect freshwater, marine, and coastal habitat. One of those commitments was:

By 2020, at least 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

– Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, Target 11

While other countries, such as Australia and the United States, have made great strides to meet their commitment – protecting 33.2 percent and 16.6 percent respectively – under Stephen Harper, Canada has protected only 1.3 percent. Even Russia is well ahead of us, having protected 11.6 percent of its marine and coastal areas.

This is yet another international environmental commitment that Stephen Harper is not on track to meet.

A Trudeau-led Liberal government will meet this commitment. We will increase the amount of Canada’s marine
and coastal areas that are protected from 1.3 percent to 5 percent by 2017, and 10 percent by 2020.

2. Invest in ocean science

We will also reinstate the $40 million that Stephen Harper cut from the federal government’s ocean science and monitoring programs. This will restore much-needed scientific capability in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and return Canada to being a well-respected world leader in oceans and marine research.

This funding will be used to ensure the health of our fish stocks, such as the iconic British Columbia salmon, monitor contaminants and pollution in our oceans, and support an environmentally sustainable, responsible, and economically successful aquaculture industry on our coasts.

We will use scientific evidence and the precautionary principle, and take into account climate change when making decisions affecting fish stocks and ecosystem management.

3. Strengthen our laws

We will restore robust oversight and thorough environmental assessments of projects that could impact areas under federal jurisdiction – including oceans and freshwater – and conduct a wholesale review of Harper’s amendments to the Fisheries Act and other legislative changes, incorporating modern safeguards to protect our oceans and freshwater fish habitat.

4. Encourage community engagement

A Liberal government will co-manage our oceans more effectively, by working with the provinces, Indigenous Peoples, and other stakeholders. We will develop plans that not only make best use of our marine resources, but give coastal communities more say in managing the resources around them.

5. Protect the marine environment from oil spills

We will formalize the moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic on British Columbia’s North Coast, including the Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait, and Queen Charlotte Sound, to ensure that ecologically sensitive areas and local economies are protected from the potentially devastating impacts of a spill.