

BUSINESS & BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE
June 11, 2008

OUTCOMES REPORT

Introduction

The need for the Business & Biodiversity Conference was stimulated by recognition of the importance of business leadership for Canadian conservation in light of the International Year for Biodiversity in 2010 with its attendant accountability for all countries to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss. Coupled with this recognition was the realisation that, while many businesses are achieving progress in conservation, more can be encouraged and achieved through collaborative efforts among businesses and across business sectors. This was borne out at the Conference with a number of ideas for a path forward.

The Conference attracted nearly 80 participants, representing 17 different business sectors, as well as environmental NGOs, journalists, academics, international organisations and governments.

Discussion was stimulated by keynote presentations, a business panel, a challenge panel and a range of speakers on potential outcomes. Those Conference presentations which were submitted in written form can be viewed at <http://www.iucn.org/places/canada/downloads.htm>.

A list of registered participants is attached, as well as the Conference programme.

Presentation and Discussion Points

This is a brief summary of the key discussion points, outcomes and next steps. It is not intended as a holistic compilation of the discussion, but mainly to provide a sense of the richness of the ideas in the room. The points are sequenced more or less chronologically and without attribution.

- * Business policies are often a matter of personal conviction. Become aware of conservation and listen to your children.
- * Communities and the environment must 'win', as well as the company.
- * Conditions and consequences relating to conservation are changing, including investor risk, brand risk, corporate reputation and technical innovation.
- * Leadership can be shown through sharing best practices.
- * 'Nature' is the world's biggest company and it is in crisis.
- * Canada has exhibited to the world a conservation ethic, which is in need of renewal.
- * The 21st century is the century of biology.
- * Biodiversity is the next challenge for financial institutions.
- * Biological resources are sustainable, if well managed.

- * Creating business plans that incorporate biodiversity conservation makes good business sense.
- * We must focus on how business can integrate into the struggle for biodiversity conservation.
- * In addition to any other permits, as responsible businesses we need a 'social licence' to operate.
- * We need to track values which shift over time and to institute cultural change in the workplace.
- * Create a group of business and NGO participants to share ideas and to develop supporting think-pieces with principles and goals for best conservation management.
- * Businesses should undertake life-cycle analyses of the overall conservation footprint of their operations.
- * Corporate biodiversity management plans are critical and must include annual reporting of results, with meaningful targets and indicators.
- * Avoid adversarial confrontations; critics can become allies with effective consultation and engagement.
- * Small conservation investments can often have significant pay-backs.
- * Small and medium enterprises need special attention; there are many of them with generally under-developed conservation infrastructures.
- * Public values tend to be 10 years ahead of regulation; we need to go beyond compliance and lead by example.
- * Canada is a 'Nature Nation'; let's show the world we understand this.
- * The time is right for business and conservation interests to work together. The challenge is how to do this.
- * Biodiversity is too complicated and boring to maintain a public focus; everyone needs to pull together to simplify it and to create momentum.
- * Financial institutions and shareholders require business accountability for conservation, including supply and distribution chains.
- * Businesses can challenge themselves to develop measurable and reportable goals for conservation by 2010.
- * Don't forget the oceans; 99% of the earth's living space is there.
- * Business collaboration works, as demonstrated by the Wildlife Habitat Council.
- * We in business are doing much for conservation, but it is not enough; the challenge is immense and we must understand what is feasible.
- * Businesses respond to consumer demand; consumers are a critical factor in the conservation equation.
- * The idea of a Canadian Conservation Forum is a good one with an initial focus on 2010.
- * There are too many business and governmental 'stovepipes' which need to be brought together for effective conservation.
- * We need to display and share achievements and best practices.
- * We need to provide guidance on conservation priorities and methods.
- * We need to raise awareness about conservation among young executives. Leaders for Nature is a good example of how to do this.
- * Focus initially on the needs for 2010 reporting.
- * Consider developing a CEO-level leadership declaration for conservation, building on current political momentum.

- * Despite instances of good practice individually, there is still a conservation crisis, partly because we do not work collectively.
- * Government could receive advice from a business forum about cross-sectoral barriers to conservation.
- * If businesses get together and advance conservation solutions, governments will listen.
- * Business could lead a mobilisation of all sectors of society through strong leadership on 'doable' tasks.
- * Governments could help by rewarding best practices.
- * Consider involving cities as well.

Outcomes Put Forward by Conference Participants

- * Create a Canadian Conservation Forum, including a multi-sectoral core steering group, with NGO and government representation, to guide next steps.
- * Call the steering group together soon to develop a 'game plan' for the Forum.
- * Prepare a business-to-business 'best practices' document for conservation.
- * Another early product should be a guide for businesses on how to understand biodiversity and how to develop corporate conservation planning.
- * Prepare accounts of conservation achievements by Canadian businesses for public display and for 2010 reporting.
- * Initiate a Canadian version of Leaders for Nature, which could also be under the guidance of the Forum.
- * Initiate discussions, including through the Council for Chief Executives, towards a high-level business declaration on conservation.

Immediate Next Steps

- * Identify high-level business 'champions' for the outcomes.
- * Seek business commitments to the outcomes, including for their funding.
- * Identify volunteers for a Forum steering group of about 10 players, including business (primarily), NGO and government.
- * Identify a host organisation to manage finances and to house any needed secretariat support.
- * After gauging the level of concrete business interest, approach government with a view to collaboration.

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