



Advocacy Policy

INTENT

To provide our staff and chapters with general guidelines to consider before engaging in advocacy activities.

Registered charities have an important role to play in public policy development, and in shaping the social, economic and political development of Canadian communities. Engaging with political issues that are directly relevant to Freshwater Conservation Canada's mandate, "To conserve, protect and restore Canada's freshwater ecosystems and coldwater resources for current and future generations" is an important part of Freshwater Conservation Canada's role as a leader in the environmental industry.

Given that Freshwater Conservation Canada is a registered Canadian charity we are bound by a number of rules, including a prohibition on engaging in partisan political activities. All Freshwater Conservation Canada Chapters operate under the same charitable registration number as Freshwater Conservation Canada-National. As such, the advocacy actions of any one Chapter are a reflection of the organization as a whole. Advocacy limitations are enforced by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); engaging in advocacy activities which do not further our stated purpose or investing more than 10% of the organizations resources could result in Freshwater Conservation Canada being audited by the CRA, potentially putting projects on hold during that time and incurring significant expense and risking the organizations charitable status.

In 2018 the federal government took action based on the recommendations of the Report of the Consultation Panel on the Political Activities of Charities, enacting new legislation which allows charities to become more active in their efforts to influence policy and decision making through Public Policy Dialogue and Development Activities (PPDDAs).

"Charitable activities include public policy dialogue and development activities (PPDDAs) that further a charitable purpose. PPDDAs generally involve seeking to influence the laws, policies, or decision of a government, whether in Canada or a foreign country. As long as a charity's PPDDAs are carried on in furtherance of its stated charitable purpose(s), the Income Tax Act places no limits on the amount of PPDDAs a charity can engage in."

Given that Freshwater Conservation Canada is action-oriented and not primarily an advocacy organization, as a guideline we strive to limit advocacy activities to 10% of our overall activities.

TIMING (WHEN TO USE)

This policy is active at all times.

DEFINITIONS

As described in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, advocacy is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal. Advocacy can take many different forms and can include anything a charity might do to influence laws, regulations, or government policies at any level, either in Canada or abroad. This can include: developing proposals for government to change, eliminate, or develop new laws and policies; reacting to government proposals and actions; participating in the process through written submissions, committee appearances, and the like; meeting with elected officials and public servants to advocate for change; and urging the public to get involved in an issue through petitions, rallies, or letter-writing campaigns.

GUIDELINES

1. General Guidelines for Freshwater Conservation Canada in Advocacy

Once it is determined that Freshwater Conservation Canada should advocate for a particular issue, these guidelines must be followed:

- A maximum of 10% of the organization or chapter's resources can be applied towards political activities (non-partisan) that further their charitable purpose.
- All activities must be non-partisan
- All activities or actions must ensure that the charitable mandate/purpose is advanced, not superseded.
- All statements/actions must be supported by the organizations values and scientific policies where applicable
- All information presented in support of public policy issues must be informative, accurate and well-reasoned.

- All statements/action must be directed towards Canadian issues, impacts and/or governments.

2. Guidelines for Chapters Prior to Engaging in Advocacy

Responses to regional, provincial, and federal issues are coordinated by Freshwater Conservation Canada staff and chapters are asked to refrain from any advocacy at this level until they have connected with Freshwater Conservation Canada staff. 'Local issues' are defined as having localized impact. Larger legislative issues with associated localized impact are not considered 'local issues' and staff should be consulted.

For local issues

- Freshwater Conservation Canada and its chapters can only comment on or advocate for/against issues directly related to the organizations mandate
- All statements must uphold the organizations values and scientific policies
- Chapters should ensure that they have the available capacity to see the effort through. Advocacy is a significant investment of time and effort.
- Chapter must contact staff prior to engaging in any advocacy
- Statements must be issued by the chapter executive and have the support of the full executive. Chapter members cannot make representation or submit statements without the support of the chapter executive.
- All statements must ensure adequate and accurate background information is reviewed to avoid spreading misinformation about any issue.
- Copies of any advocacy action must be forwarded to Freshwater Conservation Canada staff for reference

Effective Date: January 2021

Author: Silvia D'Amelio

Revised Date: N/A