



Atlantic environmental programs in jeopardy because of Conservative neglect, says Regan

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HALIFAX – The Conservative government’s lack of commitment to Atlantic Canada’s conservation and environmental education network is completely unacceptable, Halifax West MP Geoff Regan said Friday.

“The Harper government’s discriminatory attitude towards the Atlantic region threatens the vital work of 16 organizations and hundreds of dedicated volunteers in all four provinces,” Mr. Regan said.

“It shouldn’t be that difficult to make the same funding commitment for the Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) that’s been provided to similar groups in Ontario and Quebec.”

Mr. Regan said the groups have told him that while Environment Canada is providing new Ecosystem Initiative programs and support for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence regions, there is nothing for Atlantic Canada.

“This is completely unacceptable and I am calling on the government to provide the same support in 2010 in all regions of the country,” the Liberal MP said.

He also called on Conservative MPs from the region to stand up for a program that affects almost 2.5 million Atlantic Canadians and over 40,000 kilometres of shoreline.

Mr. Regan said it's critical that Ottawa provide Ecosystem Initiative support immediately or commit to one-year interim funding that will allow ACAP groups to continue the region's environmental and conservation initiatives.

"If something isn't done now, several thousand students will be left in the lurch and projects like the Sable Island Preservation Trust or the Clean Annapolis River Project may be abandoned," he noted.

In 2008 alone, over 3,000 students and youth participated in soil and water sampling projects, environmental education, outreach and engagement initiatives. And over 1,100 volunteers across the region received training and subsequently spent 35,000 hours advancing various projects.

Recommendations from ACAP activities have supported several hundred million dollars in infrastructure improvements, refocused government priorities and fostered more appropriate environmental legislation.

Mr. Regan noted that this is the third time in the last four years that the Conservatives tried to undercut this group of 16 non-profit environmental organizations that protect key watersheds and critical coastal areas.

"This government continues to jeopardize a long-standing relationship that delivers ecosystem programs which provide social and economic benefits to local communities and protects sensitive local environments," he added.

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