



Conservation | Education | Action

July 5, 2019

Honourable Catherine McKenna, MP  
Minister of Environment & Climate Change  
Centre Block, Suite 433C  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister McKenna,

Re: The Legal Domestic Trade in Elephant Ivory

Thank you for responding to our letter to your office requesting that the Federal government end the domestic trade of elephant ivory in Canada.

In our initial letter, we noted that Canada is one of the few remaining western nations where a domestic market in elephant ivory remains legal. The European Union is in the process of banning domestic trade in elephant ivory (Belgium, UK, Luxembourg, France and the Netherlands already have a ban) and nearly every state in the United States has closed their elephant ivory markets.

In addition, China closed its domestic market in 2017 – this country being the largest single ivory market in the world for both the legal and illegal trade. Since then, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan have also banned domestic ivory trade.

These closures quickly followed the proposal by the African Elephant Coalition at CITES CoP17 in 2016, calling on all countries to close domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory. Canada was present at that gathering. The proposal was supported through a unanimous resolution.

Given the above, and given that Canada has been a signatory to CITES since 1975, we were concerned by the underwhelming response from your office. There is a strong body of evidence showing the irrefutable link between legal ivory markets and the elephant poaching crisis, which is the motivation for the African Elephant Coalition proposal at CITES. Despite this, it appears your office has yet to fully grasp the importance and key conservation value of a ban on domestic trade in elephant ivory.

Illegally harvested ivory is in fact entering the country and is directly contributing to the shocking decline in the remaining populations of wild elephants. Canadian legislation allows the sale of elephant ivory from elephants killed before 1990. However, ivory is extremely difficult to date. It is easy for illegally harvested ivory to enter the Canadian market undetected.

Recent government seizures of ivory in Canada reveal with stark clarity that our legal ivory market is being used as a channel to buy and sell illegal ivory:

- In 2000, an individual in Toronto was charged with illegally importing 4,000 ivory items taken from endangered elephants.
- In 2007, a man in BC pleaded guilty to illegally importing more than 30,000 pieces of African elephant ivory.
- In 2015, radiocarbon dating of elephant ivory led to the conviction of a Toronto-based auction house and its director.
- In 2016, an Ontario business man was found guilty of smuggling elephant ivory.
- In 2017, Canada participated in a global enforcement operation to counter poaching and related wildlife crimes, during which elephant ivory was found coming into Canada.
- The CITES trade database indicates that Canada has imported as much or more than 340kgs of elephant tusks over the past five years alone.

Approximately 25,000 to 30,000 elephants are poached in Africa every year. This mortality rate exceeds the elephant birth rate, threatening the survival of the entire species. As it stands, Canada is actively contributing to the disappearance of this iconic species. This can, and must, change.

Elephanatics has formed the **Ivory-Free Canada Coalition (#IvoryFreeCanada)**. The Global March for Elephants and Rhinos – Toronto, World Elephant Day, Humane Society International – Canada and the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada have all joined the coalition.

More than 400,000 people have signed our petition for Canada to end this trade. The Ivory-Free Canada Coalition is about to launch a major, international campaign titled **“500,000 Signatures by World Elephant Day.”**

August 12 is the 8th annual World Elephant Day and presents an excellent opportunity for the Government of Canada to champion global wildlife conservation by announcing its intention to end the domestic trade of elephant ivory. World Elephant Day is a global event and a Canadian-led initiative, founded in 2012.

CITES CoP18 is being held in Geneva from August 17 to 28. The conference offers another strong opportunity to demonstrate Canada’s leadership at a forum dedicated to wildlife protection.

With an upcoming election in October, constituents will be looking to parties on this and related issues.

The Ivory-Free Canada Coalition urges you to:

1. Close Canada’s domestic trade of elephant ivory.
2. Make the import, export and re-export of all elephant ivory illegal, including ivory that is raw, worked, a hunting trophy or acquired prior to 1990.

We believe we can liaise with this government on how best to implement a workable ban on the domestic elephant ivory trade, with sensible restrictions. Canada can demonstrate its leadership on urgent issues that threaten the biodiversity of our planet.

We look forward to hearing from you and respectfully request a response and a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



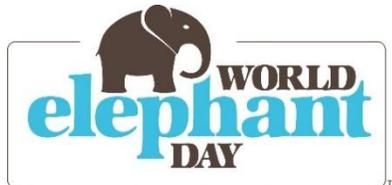
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President, Elephanatics  
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cc. Dr Stephen Lucas - Deputy Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
James Maloney - Member of Parliament, Etobicoke  
Minister Bill Blair - Minister of Border Security and Crime Reduction

**In partnership with the other members of the Ivory-Free Canada Coalition:**



Janine Cavin and  
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Co-Founders  
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Patricia Sims  
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