

## BC Budget 2023 Consultation - Speaking Notes

**Date:** June 6, 2022

**Time:** 1:35PM

**Location:** Douglas Fir Committee Room (Room 226), Parliament Buildings

**Presenter:** Lucas Harris - Executive Director, Surfrider Foundation Canada

- My name is Lucas Harris. I am the Executive Director of Surfrider Foundation Canada.
- I am grateful to be speaking to you today on the territory of the Lekwungen speaking peoples, as well as the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples.
- The Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's ocean, waves and beaches for all people through a powerful activist network.
- Surfrider Foundation Canada (SFC) is part of the global Surfrider community of international affiliates located in countries around the world. Surfrider has three local volunteer-run chapters based in Tofino/Ucluelet (Pacific Rim Chapter), Victoria (Vancouver Island Chapter) and Vancouver and two school clubs at the University of Victoria and Ucluelet Secondary School.
- Surfrider focuses on several key environmental issues, including plastics reduction, ocean protection, beach access, coastal preservation and water quality.
- Surfrider is a key stakeholder with regards to plastic reduction and offers a unique perspective given its role leading grassroots volunteer-driven pollution prevention initiatives in communities across British Columbia (B.C.) over the last 10 years.
- In recent years, the Province of B.C. has demonstrated major leadership in reducing plastic pollution.
- The Clean Coast Clean Waters initiative has been a groundbreaking program, removing hundreds of tonnes of marine debris from shorelines across the province.

- The engagement on Preventing Single-Use and Plastic Waste in British Columbia currently underway also demonstrates leadership in addressing plastic pollution.
- However, there are several key categories of plastic that also need to be addressed in order for the Province to significantly reduce the impact of plastic pollution in the B.C. coastal marine environment.
- For the purposes of today's budget consultation, I have prepared three recommendations for the committee to consider
- **Recommendation 1:** Develop a program for commercial fishing and aquaculture gear used in B.C. industry that will reduce gear loss, support recovery of gear from the marine environment and enable proper processing and end of life management of retrieved materials.
  - Time and time again, abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) from the commercial fishing and aquaculture industries have dominated the results of Surfrider volunteer-led cleanups.
  - The impact of fishing gear has also been documented in the results of the Clean Coast Clean Waters (CCCW) initiative, with early results from several projects showing that the volume of fishing gear vastly exceeds the volume of single-use plastic packaging material and other types of plastic.
  - To fully address plastic pollution in B.C., it's imperative that ALDFG be addressed.
- **Recommendation 2:** Develop policies and systems that improve the environmental monitoring, regulation, and enforcement of pre-consumer plastic production pellets (nurdles)
  - Nurdles are being discharged into British Columbia waterways by plastic manufacturing facilities.
  - Surfrider has found direct evidence that these plastic pellets are entering the marine environment from plastic production facilities in the Lower Mainland, particularly along multiple arms of the Fraser River.

- Nurdles devastate the environment and marine life but, despite being one of the biggest sources of pollution in our oceans, they are often overlooked.
- Environmental monitoring and enforcement of this issue has been limited, but needs to increase. Mitigation efforts at these facilities also need to switch from a voluntary to a mandatory approach.
- This would help reduce plastic pellet pollution that is accumulating in rivers and on the coast and impacting marine life.
- **Recommendation 3:** Develop policies and programs that prioritize the reduction of cigarette butt litter.
  - Year after year, the number one type of plastic pollution found on Canadian shorelines is cigarette butts.
  - Cigarette butts are a pervasive, long-lasting, and toxic form of marine debris.
  - They contain over thousands of chemicals, many of which are carcinogenic. When the butts end up in our environment, these chemicals can gradually leach into our waterways and are then absorbed by fish and other marine animals.
  - SFC Chapters have implemented cigarette butt collection and recycling programs in several B.C. communities, resulting in millions of butts being recycled instead of ending up in the waterways.
  - Regardless, cigarette butts continue to plague the marine environment in these and other communities across B.C.
  - Several options are available to increase the prevention of cigarette butt waste, including developing biodegradable filters, increasing fines and penalties for littering butts, EPR, monetary deposits on filters, increasing availability of butt receptacles, and expanded public education.
- The single-use plastic policies that the Province has introduced show leadership in addressing plastic pollution. But it's clear that these materials are only a small component of the plastic pollution found in



the B.C. marine environment. More needs to be done that prevents ALDFG, nurdle and cigarette butt pollution upstream to truly reduce plastic pollution in B.C.

- SFC takes pride in its collaborative and positive approach to solving environmental problems.
- We look forward to continuing the strong relationship we have with the Province of BC.
- Together, we have the opportunity to make the coast a cleaner, safer place for all people to enjoy.
- Thank you!