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Letter to candidates for the BC legislature:

We are a group of environmental scientists based at Simon Fraser University, and are concerned that British Columbia currently has no law that specifically protects endangered plants and animals in 99% of the province. We are writing to recommend the creation of such a law, and to ask what your position is on this important issue.

The federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) was passed in 2002 to protect wildlife species that have been identified by the best available science as being threatened with extinction in Canada. As a federal law, SARA only applies to federal crown land. To be effective, complementary legislation must be passed by the provinces to ensure that listed species are also protected on provincial lands. To date, all provinces except BC and Alberta have passed such a law. As a result, federally listed endangered species are protected in only about 1% of our province.

In 2009 the BC Government struck a task force to address species at risk policy in BC. The government's response to their report failed to recommend the creation of a SARA-style law for BC, despite input on the merits of such a law from many experts. As scientists with an interest in managing biodiversity, we feel that this legislative gap is unacceptable – there are currently 164 federally listed species in BC that need active management to rebuild to sustainable levels.

Bill M-211 (the Species Protection Act) was tabled in 2011 to bring endangered species protection to BC. This bill did not pass, but it satisfied most of the requirements of an endangered species law – it prohibited harming endangered species and mandated protection for the species' critical habitat. In addition, it provided a way for a minister to prevent a species from being listed if he or she determined that legal protection would be too costly.

We hope that you make species at risk legislation a priority if you are elected in May. We recently made a single recommendation to the BC government, which you would be in a position to act on if elected. That recommendation was for the government to “**Develop, consult on, and implement complementary legislation to the federal Species at Risk Act, to ensure that federally listed species receive protection in the 99% of British Columbia that is composed of provincial and private lands.**” This common-sense recommendation would help prevent the ongoing loss of biodiversity in our province, and would be relatively straightforward to design and implement.

A SARA-style law would serve as a last line of defense for species in BC that are threatened with extinction. It would be designed to recover those species to a level where they no longer require special protection. This is the model that is used throughout Canada and elsewhere in the world, and it works.

We would appreciate a response so that we can inform our many colleagues, peers and students who have expressed concern of where you stand on this important issue. We would be happy to speak to you further, offer documentation to back up our claims, and to lend our expertise where possible. More information is available at [www.scientists-4-species.org](http://www.scientists-4-species.org).

Sincerely,

Dr. Arne Mooers  
Professor of Biodiversity  
Chair of the Biodiversity and Conservation Committee of the Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution

Dr. Isabelle M. Côté  
Professor of Marine Ecology and Conservation

Dr. John D. Reynolds  
Professor and BC Leadership Chair in Salmon Conservation

Dr. Nicholas K. Dulvy  
Professor  
Canada Research Chair in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation

Dr. David J. Green  
Associate Professor of Landbird Research

Dr. Jonathan W. Moore  
Assistant Professor  
Liber Ero Chair of Coastal Science and Management

Dr. Wendy J. Palen  
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Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Aquatic Conservation

Dr. Anna E. Drake  
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