



# Corporatizing Conservation: An Analysis of Funding and Board Membership of Canadian Land Trusts

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## INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity has continued to decline around the world.<sup>1</sup> Private land trusts have become an important and growing avenue for biodiversity conservation today.<sup>2</sup> Governments at all levels in Canada are seeking ways to reduce fiscal deficits; there is an increasing reliance on the private sector, and private-public partnerships, to carry out conservation.<sup>3,4</sup> The goal of this project was to study trends in the funding of major private land trust organizations in Canada over the past 15 years to investigate the relationship between conservation and the private sector in Canada. The focus was on the rise of corporate funding and the identification of major companies and sectors that fund private conservation work. Board membership of the largest land trust in Canada was also analyzed to reveal relations to corporate figures. Conservation occurs in a distinct political, social, and economic context, and understanding these relationships can help illuminate the power and governance landscape of major non-state conservation initiatives in Canada.

## RESULTS

Organizational funding analyzed accounted for 54% of NCC and DUC's total revenue, 49% of which was donated by corporations or corporate foundations. Corporate funding for NCC and DUC combined rose from \$11 million in 2002 to \$62 million in 2014, an annual growth rate of 14%. Roughly one third of corporate funding is from resource based companies. Out of 153 total NCC board members, those with predominately corporate affiliations increased from 13% in the 1960s to 50% in the 2000s. Nearly 40% of the members with corporate affiliations had strong ties to the oil, gas, or mining industries.

## DISCUSSION

This research highlights several trends in the funding of the two largest and most influential land trusts in Canada in an attempt to identify links between the corporate-capitalist sector and private conservation. Land trusts in Canada are growing in size and scope and are receiving increasing funding from the corporate sector, a significant portion of which is sourced from resource industries. NCC and DUC are also receiving more government funding which suggests an increasing reliance on the private sector for conservation work and meeting Canada's global biodiversity targets.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, NCC's board composition has seen an increasing proportion of members with high-ranking corporate affiliations, many of them from major resource-based oil and gas companies. Emerging corporate partnerships can open doors to new forms of corporate environmentalism.<sup>4</sup> Further research is needed to describe the extent to which land trusts provide industries with opportunities to greenwash their corporate images and purchase social license through the donation of funds to private conservation organizations.

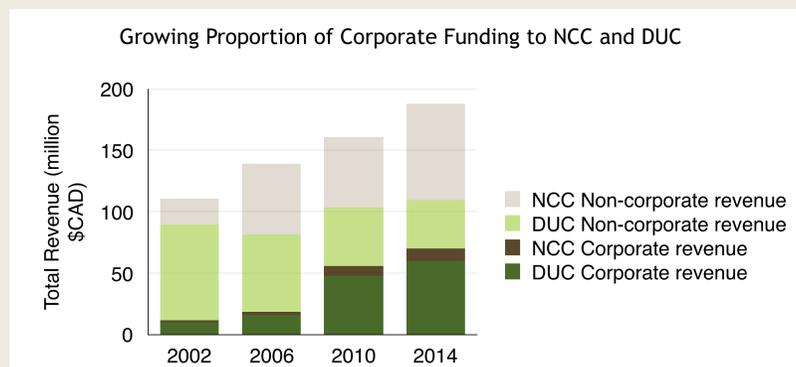


Figure 2. Total revenue to NCC (in blue) and DUC (in green) over 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014 split into corporate and non-corporate sources which includes governments, foundations, NGOs, and individuals.

## CONCLUSIONS

In Canada, land trusts are rapidly growing in size and scope. There is an overall trend of increasing corporate funding to the major land trusts studied, NCC and DUC, as well as an increasing percentage of board members with major corporate affiliations, especially those in the resource and extraction industries. A trend towards increasing government funding, especially federal funding, was also observed. This study supports the hypothesis that there is an increasing trend in the number and types of relationships and partnerships that exist between the corporate-capitalist sector and major conservation organizations.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup> Further research will help determine how these observations may be changing the nature of conservation in Canada.



Figure 1. Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ducks Unlimited Canada are the two largest land trusts in Canada. Logos used with permission.

## METHODS

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) were the two primary trusts studied. Data were acquired by reviewing annual financial reports. The average revenue of each trust over the past decade is roughly \$85 million. Only organizational funders, such as foundations, governments, corporations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), were analyzed in this research, and only those who donated \$10,000 or more. To represent the past 15 years, the years 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014 were sampled. Each funder, or board member, was researched and classified into groups or sectors for analysis.



Figure 3. Corporate funding by sector to NCC and DUC over 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014. Total: \$159 million

Figure 4. NCC Board Members (1968-2015) grouped by major sector affiliation. Total: 153

Table 1. Examples of NCC board members with high-ranking corporate affiliations in resource industries

Name	Years	Positions Held
Pierre Alvarez	2011-2012	<b>Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers</b> (President), <b>Nexen Inc.</b> (Vice President)
J. Sherrold Moore	1994-2005	<b>Amoco Canada Petroleum Company Ltd.</b> (Senior Vice President)
George R. Richards	1997-2008	<b>Weldwood of Canada</b> (CEO)
Michael W. O'Brien	1994-2005	<b>Suncor</b> (Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer), <b>Canadian Fuels Association</b> (Chair)

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