WHAT ARE ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS?

Over the past 50 years, the right to a healthy environment has gained recognition faster than any other human right. **The rights protected by a right to healthy environment include breathing clean air, drinking clean water, consuming safe food, accessing nature, knowing about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment.**

Evidence shows that countries with environmental rights and responsibilities in their constitutions:

- Have smaller per capita ecological footprints;
- Rank higher on environmental performance measured by a suite of 15 indicators;
- Are more likely to have ratified international environmental agreements; and
- Have been more successful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

More than half of the world’s nations recognize their citizens’ right to a healthy environment. Canada is among a minority of countries that does not yet this right - our Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not explicitly protect or even address environmental rights. Just as the Charter guarantees us freedom of expression and protects us from discrimination, environmental rights would ensure that our laws and policies protect the basic elements of our survival, such as clean air, safe water and unpolluted land.

For more information on Environmental Rights, read:

- [Ecojustice primer on right to healthy environment](#)
- [David Boyd’s white papers on right to healthy environment](#)