

David Suzuki Foundation

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The **David Suzuki Foundation** is an environmental organization based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. It is a non-profit organization that is incorporated in both Canada and the United States, and is funded by over 40,000 donors. The Foundation describes its goal as to:

Work towards balancing human needs with the Earth's ability to sustain all life. Our goal is to find and communicate practical ways to achieve that balance.

David Suzuki Foundation	
Type	Non-profit
Founded	Vancouver, British Columbia (1991)
Headquarters	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Key people	Peter Robinson, CEO
Industry	Environmental Policy and Education
Website	www.davidsuzuki.org

Its origins lie in a 1989 "think-tank" retreat on Pender Island, British Columbia that was organized by David Suzuki and Tara Cullis. A dozen concerned individuals were invited, and inspired by those discussions the Foundation was incorporated on September 14, 1990. It officially opened its doors on January 1, 1991. It is a federally registered Canadian charity supported entirely by Foundation grants and donations. It does not accept any government funding, except from the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.^[1] It is also not a funding body for other organizations. Currently the Foundation employs roughly fifty staff members.^[2] The Foundation's CEO is Peter Robinson, formerly the head of Mountain Equipment Co-op.

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Programs

The Foundation focuses its work on the following four program areas:^[3]

- Oceans and sustainable fishing,
- Climate change and clean energy,
- Sustainability, and
- the Nature Challenge

As part of its work the Foundation publishes newsletters, scientific studies, research reports, books, information kits, brochures, and news releases. It also has two ongoing programs to help reach its goals, the first is the Nature Challenge and the second is Sustainability Within A Generation.

David Suzuki's Nature Challenge

As a mechanism to promote public awareness and action with regard to the Foundation's four focuses, the Foundation created the Nature Challenge program. In consultation with the Union of Concerned Scientists the Foundation researched the most effective ways to help conserve nature and improve our quality of life, and invited the public to embrace them in their daily lives. Their list is:

- Reduce home energy use by 10%
- Choose an energy-efficient home & appliances
- Don't use pesticides
- Eat meat-free meals one day a week
- Buy locally grown and produced food
- Choose a fuel-efficient vehicle

- Walk, bike, carpool or take transit
- Choose a home close to work or school
- Support alternative transportation
- Learn more and share with others

As of November 2007, over 360,000 individuals had taken David Suzuki's Nature Challenge.^[4] Many famous Canadians are taking David Suzuki's Nature Challenge, including Nelly Furtado, Sam Roberts, Margaret Atwood, Robert Munsch, Larry Campbell, and David Miller.

Sustainability Within a Generation

"Canada vs the OECD: An Environmental Comparison", a 2001 report published by University of Victoria Eco-Research Chair of Environmental Law and Policy Staff and authored by David R. Boyd, environmental lawyer and coauthor of the forthcoming book *David Suzuki's Guide to Helping the Planet*^[5], examined 25 environmental indicators, ranks Canada 28th out of the 29 OECD nations. The foundation and Boyd created a separate report, "Sustainability within a Generation", that addresses Canada's capacities to improve sustainability and environmental conservation. The foundation believes this can be best accomplished by improving efficiency, eliminating waste and pollution, and building sustainable cities.

In February 2004, Suzuki met with the then Prime Minister of Canada Paul Martin to present the Foundation's report on how sustainability could be achieved within a generation.

Criticism

List of donors

During an interview on the *John Oakley Show* in Toronto, Suzuki stated that his foundation is funded by ordinary people and corporations had not been interested in funding the foundation.^[6]

President of the Canadian Centre for Policy Studies Joseph C. Ben-Ami, citing this statement in his article "Global Warming Charlatan" notes that the foundation's 2005-2006 annual report^[7] lists 52 corporations, including Bell Canada, Toyota, IBM, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Scotia Capital, Warner Bros., Canon and the Bank of Montreal, amongst its 40,000 donors. Other corporate donors include EnCana Corporation, a world leader in natural gas production and oil sands development, and ATCO Gas, Alberta's principle distributor of natural gas, and OPG which is one of the largest suppliers of electricity in the world operating 5 fossil fuel-burning generation plants and 3 nuclear plants.^[8]

Tom Brodbeck of Sun Media says on the same issue that "when Suzuki criticizes other scientists for allegedly being funded by oil companies, when he himself receives funding from a natural gas distributor, I think it's a bit hypocritical."^[9]

The David Suzuki Foundation does accept some corporate donations. However these are, as Suzuki suggests, a very small part of the Foundation's operating budget. Three-quarters of the Foundation's 40,000 supporters have donated less than \$500.^[7]

Political involvement

Columnist (now editor) Licia Corbella of *The Calgary Sun* writing about Suzuki meeting with Calgary elementary school students, states that the speech "was essentially urging those listening not to vote Conservative. That makes his message partisan and should exempt the David Suzuki Foundation from receiving tax deductible status."^[10]

However, Suzuki makes a distinction between what he says as an individual and what the Foundation says. For example, he has called Ottawa's plan to fight global warming a "national embarrassment" and has said of the government's energy policy: "it's not a strategy, it's a sham." He makes it clear that this is his personal opinion and has "nothing to do with [his] foundation."^[11] On the other hand, as Lloyd Alter notes in an article in *Treehugger*, in Canadian law, charities *are* permitted to comment on politics:

"Charities have wide latitude to comment on politics, provided they don't endorse parties or candidates and can devote up to 10 per cent of their resources for non-partisan political activities... this spending can be undertaken 'to influence law, policy, and public opinion on matters related to its charitable purposes.' Among the permitted activities, groups can meet with elected officials, hold conferences, workshops, lectures and rallies, and mount letter-writing campaigns about issues."^[11]

"Certainly I try very, very hard not to be partisan," Suzuki states, "but I still will criticize government for policy. I think that's the

right of all people."^[1]

References

- ¹ ^ David Suzuki Foundation, David Suzuki Foundation. "Frequently Asked Questions". Retrieved on 2007-10-02.
- ² ^ David Suzuki Foundation, David Suzuki Foundation. "Foundation Team". Retrieved on 2007-10-02.
- ³ ^ About us. David Suzuki Foundation. Retrieved on: September 8, 2007.
- ⁴ ^ Challenge. David Suzuki's Nature Challenge. Retrieved on: October 2, 2007.
- ⁵ ^ *David Suzuki's Guide to Helping the Planet* at Amazon.com
- ⁶ ^ John Oakley interview with David Suzuki
- ⁷ ^ ^a ^b David Suzuki Foundation Annual Report 05/06
- ⁸ ^ Global warming charlatan
- ⁹ ^ Suck_it_up,_Suzuki
- ¹⁰ ^ Licia Corbella (February 28, 2007). "This is a Charity?" *The Calgary Sun*.
- ¹¹ ^ ^a ^b ^c Lloyd Alter (June 6, 2007). "Revenooers Chasing David Suzuki." treehugger.com. Retrieved on: October 6, 2007.

External links

- Official site of the David Suzuki Foundation
- DSF's Nature Challenge website
- DSF's Sustainability Within A Generation website
- Sustainability within a Generation (report)
- Reports published by the David Suzuki Foundation
- Canada vs the OECD: An Environmental Comparison
- Video segment from 'Connected Life'

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