

February 3, 2025

Premier Doug Ford

Marit Stiles, Leader, Official Opposition / Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario

Mike Schreiner, Leader, Green Party of Ontario

Bonnie Crombie, Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario

Dear Premier Ford, MPP Stiles, MPP Schreiner and Ms. Crombie,

Re: Commit to Nature this Election

We, the 45 undersigned organizations, are writing to request that each of your political parties commit to protecting and restoring nature as part of your provincial election priorities.

There are many challenges facing Ontario, but the interrelated crises of biodiversity loss and climate change will fundamentally affect the long-term health and sustainability of the province without swift and strong action.

The December 2024 [Transformative Change Report](#) from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services once again highlights the urgency of addressing biodiversity loss and defines transformative change as shifts in views (i.e. how people think, know and see), structures (i.e. how we organize, regulate and govern) and practices (i.e. how we act, behave and relate). Our political structures must heed this advice.

In Ontario, the 2024 [Auditor General Annual Reports](#) shine a light on the continued pattern of [weakening environmental protections](#) in Ontario. Yet, [polling from May 2024](#) shows Ontarians overwhelmingly (88%) agree that the province should invest in the protection, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity.

For these reasons, the next provincial government must commit to protecting and restoring nature.

Specifically, we ask for the following commitments in your election priorities:

Commit to a strategy to halt and reverse biodiversity decline in alignment with national and international commitments by:

- Protecting 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030

- Restoring and enhancing protections for Ontario's species at risk
- Enabling and respecting Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, and other Indigenous-led conservation efforts
- Increasing climate adaptation funding to nature-based solutions (e.g. wetland restoration, tree planting)
- Permanently protecting large intact forest areas of public lands from industrial resource extraction (e.g. mining and forestry)

Ensure Ontario's provincial planning framework protects our ecosystems and biodiversity by:

- Restoring the powers of the Conservation Authorities
- Reversing changes to the *Planning Act* and overall provincial policy framework that encourage sprawl and weaken protections for natural heritage
- Cancelling Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, investing in public and active transportation and increased density in existing urban boundaries instead
- Reversing changes that limit the protections of all wetlands and make it easier for wetlands to lose their provincially significant status
- Enhancing protections and expanding the Greenbelt

Ontarians care about and understand the value of nature and its importance to our economic, social and environmental well-being. We would be pleased to meet with each of you or your respective staff to discuss the above referenced priorities to protect and restore nature. Please contact Tony Morris, Conservation Policy and Campaigns Director, Ontario Nature at 416-444-8419 ext. 239 or tonym@ontarionature.org, with any questions or to arrange a meeting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Caroline Schultz
Executive Director
Ontario Nature



Jessica Lax
Executive Director
Algonquin to Adirondack
Collaborative



Mary Lou Gerow
Executive Secretary
Bancroft Field Naturalists



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Director
 Bert Miller Nature Club



Carl Michener
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 Durham Region Field
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 Friends of Ojibway Prairie



Susan Moore
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 Friends of Salmon River



Wioletta Walancik
*Administrative &
 Programs Director*
 Friends of Second Marsh



Janet Stavinga
Co-Founder and President
 Friends of Stittsville
 Wetlands



Craig Pezik
*Stewardship and Conservation
 Manager*
 Friends of the Wye Marsh



Jen Baker
General Manager
 Hamilton Naturalists' Club



Robin Harmer
Chair
 Headwaters Nature



Headwaters Nature
"Exploring nature in the Headwaters area"

Richard Heron
President
 Huntsville Nature Club



Christine Roberts
President
 Huron Fringe Field
 Naturalists



Peter Krats
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Miranda Virtanen
Executive Director
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Nancy Vidler
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Gabrielle Untermann
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Land Over Landings



Marilyn Murray
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Lennox and Addington Stewardship Council



Robert Codd
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 Now!



Paul Harpley
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 Sunfish Lake Association



Lynn Miller
President
 Toronto Field Naturalists



Victoria Bao Wang
*Member of Core Circle, on
 behalf of Core Circle*
 Toronto Nature Stewards



Kelly-Sue O'Connor
President
 West Elgin Nature Club



Cathie Coultis
Chairperson
 West Lake Community
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Gloria Marsh
Executive Director
 York Region Environmental
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Helene Van Houten
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