

December 16, 2024

The Honourable Todd McCarthy
Acting Minister of Environment,
Conservation and Parks
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, Ontario
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The Honourable Graydon Smith
Minister of Natural Resources
Whitney Block 5th Floor
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Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Ministers McCarthy and Smith,

Re: Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Cooperation for Nature

We, the 60 undersigned organizations, are writing to request the Government of Ontario commit to the protection and restoration of nature across Ontario. [Ontario Nature](#) represents more than 30,000 Ontarians and more than 150 member groups across the province, many as signatories to this letter, to safeguard Ontario's wild species and wild spaces. [Nature Canada](#), brings together more than 250,000 individual Canadians and a network of more than 1,200 organizations, across every province and territory including Ontario.

Addressing the key drivers of biodiversity loss will help build climate resilience in our communities and ensure that our natural heritage is protected for the long term. The drivers of nature loss are land use change, invasive species, climate change, pollution, and the exploitation of natural resources. Halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity will not only be accomplished through federal actions but will require provincial and territorial governments to play a significant role in this important work. In fact, achieving our national conservation targets can only be done through true intergovernmental partnership, with the provinces playing at least an equal role with the federal government and demonstrating national leadership. Other key stakeholders in these actions include municipalities and Indigenous communities who are often those most affected by biodiversity loss.

The release of the federal government's [2030 Nature Strategy](#) in June 2024 was an important first step in addressing this crisis. It also is the first step in meeting our international commitments to the [2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#). We were encouraged by your recent participation in the June 2024 FPT

meetings on nature as well as your contributions to the 2030 Nature Strategy annexes that highlight the work that Ontario is doing for nature.

However, we call on the Government of Ontario to show leadership by effectively implementing the existing provincial [Biodiversity Strategy](#) and aligning it with federal activities in the 2030 Nature Strategy. The Ontario Biodiversity Strategy already incorporates many of the targets of the global biodiversity framework and 2030 Nature Strategy but requires a coordinated and consistent commitment across government ministries to implement the actions identified in the strategy. This will require appropriate resourcing and Ministerial accountability through appropriate legislation to achieve the goals outlined in the strategy:

- Empower all people to value, respect and take steps to conserve, recover and sustainably manage biodiversity.
- Protect, restore and recover ecosystem, species and genetic diversity and the benefits that biodiversity provides for all living things.
- Manage biodiversity sustainably in an inclusive and equitable way.
- Mobilize human and financial resources to scale-up actions to conserve biodiversity.
- Listen to and learn from Indigenous People and pursue reconciliation through biodiversity conservation.

Additionally, we request that the Government of Ontario commit to working in tandem with the federal 2030 Nature Strategy to protect and restore biodiversity in Canada by taking the following specific actions under relevant targets, in addition to those already identified in the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy:

- Restoration (Target 2): restore 30% of all degraded ecosystems by,
 - increasing funding to habitat restoration across the province through one streamlined program instead of separate programs like the Wetlands Conservation Partner Program and Species at Risk Stewardship Program.
- Protected Areas (Target 3): conserve 30% of land and waters by 2030 by,
 - committing to the target and rapidly increasing expansion of protected areas and other effective conservation measures, in consultation with Indigenous communities. Refer to additional recommendations on this subject from a [recent joint letter](#) regarding the expanding protected areas project engagement the province undertook in August, 2024.

- Species at Risk (Target 4): halt species extinction, protect genetic diversity, and manage human-wildlife conflicts by,
 - [restoring the integrity](#) of Ontario's *Endangered Species Act* and ensure its effective implementation by reversing recent changes that have increased exemptions and weakened protections.

- Invasive Species (Target 6): reduce the introduction of invasive alien species by 50% and minimize their impact by,
 - more effectively coordinating government responses and acting on the recommendations from the [2022 Value for Money Audit on the Management of Invasive Species by the Auditor General of Ontario](#). Note that the Invasive Species Centre has estimated the economic impacts of invasive species to be approximately \$3.6 billion per year.

- Pollution (Target 7): reduce pollution to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity by,
 - adopting coordinated actions across relevant provincial ministries to reduce excess nutrients and road salts in the environment, reducing the risk of harmful pesticides and hazardous chemicals, and preventing, reducing and eliminating plastic pollution.

- Impacts of Climate Change (Target 8): minimize the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and build resilience by,
 - restoring the powers of Conservation Authorities to effectively manage climate risks, specifically overall watershed health and natural heritage management that reduces the risks of natural hazards (i.e. flooding and erosion); and,
 - creating dedicated funding for climate adaptation that municipalities can access to widely implement green and blue infrastructure and other nature-based solutions to both mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- Sustainability of Resource Industries (Target 10): enhance biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry by,
 - committing to strengthening and expanding protections for Ontario's Greenbelt, Niagara Escarpment, Lake Simcoe, Oak Ridges Moraine and prime agricultural lands to ensure a robust food system that supports and maintains natural areas and biodiversity;
 - amending rural land and agricultural policies to incentivize biodiversity friendly practices; and,

- committing to a FPT process to develop a regulatory framework to halt forest degradation, as committed to in the [Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#).
- Urban Planning (Target 12): enhance green spaces and urban planning for human well-being and biodiversity by,
 - reforming provincial land use planning legislation and policies to encourage compact, transit supported development that utilizes green and blue infrastructure to integrate biodiversity effectively into urban development, while minimizing inefficient sprawl land use patterns.

We would be pleased to meet with each of you, your respective staff, or ministry officials to discuss the next steps in this important work and how our organizations can support you, whether in the development of provincial plans, the mobilization of public support, or collaboration with other governments. Please contact the following individuals at Ontario Nature or Nature Canada with any questions, or to schedule meetings: Tony Morris, Conservation Policy and Campaigns Director, Ontario Nature at 416-444-8419 ext. 239 or tonym@ontarionature.org, or Julia Laforge, Policy and Campaign Manager, Protected Areas, Nature Canada at 613-562-3447 or jlaforge@naturecanada.ca.

If you need any additional information, please feel free to contact us at your convenience. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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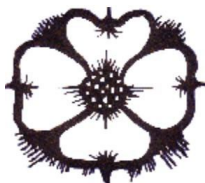
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