

May 5, 2025

To: Hon. Doug Ford, Ontario Premier premier@ontario.ca
Hon. Todd McCarthy, Ontario Minister of the Environment, Conservation & Parks minister.mecp@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Ford and Minister McCarthy,

We write to strongly urge you to support the **Lake Partner Program** (LPP) by confirming a new 5-year agreement between the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). We have been working with your staff since November 2024, to confirm a new 5-year agreement and while we understand that the provincial election caused delays, we bring this matter urgently to your attention as you prepare to table the budget.

The previous agreement ended in March, and we have now reached a critical point in the sampling annual cycle, which puts the **2025 data at risk**. Sampling kits have been distributed and will soon be returned to the lab for analysis. Time is of the essence.

For 30 years, this important long-term data collection, management, and interpretation has been possible through the ongoing efforts of the MECP, FOCA's staff, and the 629 FOCA Lake Steward volunteers who monitor 546 lakes at 917 sites across the province.

The LPP provides immense value to the public and to Ontario as a whole. It is one of the largest long-term databases on water quality for freshwater lakes, and the data is essential for research and analysis conducted by universities, government, community groups, and scientists. It informs policy, tracks changes over time, and enables science-based decision-making about our environment. Find out more about the program, here: <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program/>.

Although the sampling is done by volunteers, the LPP is not possible without the Ministry's involvement, through conducting the lab analysis of the samples, and financial support of the FOCA staff role of Assistant Lake Stewardship Coordinator to coordinate the hundreds of volunteers and requests for information and outreach about the program.

This is a proven, cost-effective model of citizen science. For a modest annual investment, the province leverages thousands of volunteer hours and builds community engagement around a shared goal: safeguarding Ontario's inland lakes.

Freshwater is one of our most precious and valuable resources—supporting biodiversity, recreation, property values, and local economies. In times of global environmental and economic uncertainty, protecting water quality and preserving long-term datasets like those in the LPP is more important than ever.

For a modest annual contribution, the province can continue to capitalize on this cost-effective program that leverages thousands of volunteer hours each year. We need you to help us to save the LPP and the important information it provides to understand and protect the health of Ontario's inland waters.

Sincerely,



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FOCA is a non-profit membership organization representing over 525 lake, cottage, camp, and rural waterfront residents' associations, and the 250,000 families and voters that own waterfront property across Ontario. Waterfront property owners matter to rural Ontario, stewarding 15,000 km of shorelines and 50 hectares of privately-owned waterfront lands from Kenora to Kingston to Lake Erie to north of Temagami. FOCA's [2022 Economic Impact Study](#) confirmed that for every 100 waterfront properties located in a community, 63 jobs are created in Ontario, with 54 of those jobs in the community itself.