

October 23, 2023

The Honourable Andrea Khanjin, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
5th Floor  
777 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Khanjin,

**Re: Advancing Protected and Conserved Areas in Ontario**

On April 1, 2021 the Ontario government [announced the appointment of a working group of conservation experts](#) to “identify opportunities to protect and conserve more natural areas” in the province, a key commitment in the government’s [Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan](#). The working group provided a report with recommendations to the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks entitled, “A New Approach: Advancing Protected and Conserved Areas in Ontario.” The [report](#) was only recently made available to the public through a Freedom of Information request.

On behalf of the 124 undersigned organizations, we urge you to implement key recommendations of the report, specifically: 1) to partner with Indigenous Nations and engage the public, municipalities and interested groups to immediately implement a strategy to protect 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030 and 2) to establish an innovation fund to support implementation. We urge you to make funding and resources available commensurate with the globally significant opportunity that is available in Ontario right now.

There is a groundswell of support for designing, building and implementing new protected areas in Ontario. Indigenous communities and non-profit organizations have been taking the lead to identify potential candidate protected areas, including Indigenous-led conservation proposals and grassroots efforts, such as the [Your Protected Places Project](#) and the [Peoples Summit on Protecting Areas in Ontario](#). These could inform a larger provincial strategy, while bringing additional leadership, expertise and local support to the table to meet these ambitious and urgent objectives.

Faced as we are with unprecedented and accelerating levels of biodiversity loss and ever spiraling climate change impacts, the need to expand and strengthen protected and conserved areas in Ontario has never been more urgent. They offer an immediate,

tangible approach to conserving the plants, animals and ecosystems that sustain us and to enhancing our resilience to climate change.

There is no time like the present to take ambitious steps towards expanding and strengthening protected and conserved areas in Ontario. You have a strong mandate to proceed. As demonstrated by polling commissioned by the expert working group, over 86 percent of Ontarians support the expansion of parks and protected areas, and the majority would be willing to pay higher taxes to support this work.

We are confident that Ontario can play a leadership role in meeting the target of protecting 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030, embraced by Canada and other parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal last December. Doing so will require a strong government mandate, cooperation across government ministries, consultation with and consent from Indigenous communities, and collaboration with conservation experts. A clear and transparent strategy with timelines and objectives will be essential, as outlined in the working group report.

We urge you to take immediate action and would welcome an opportunity to work with you. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

<b>Katie Krelove</b> Ontario Campaigner Wilderness Committee	<b>Caroline Schultz</b> Executive Director Ontario Nature	<b>Barbara Schumacher</b> Research Lead 50by30 Waterloo Region	<b>Zoe Green</b> Co-founder Action 13
<b>Jackie Bowen</b> Director of Conservation Adirondack Council	<b>Nasha Choudhury</b> Executive Director Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative	<b>Peter Quinby, Ph.D.</b> Chair and Chief Scientist Ancient Forest Exploration & Research	<b>Don Morgan</b> Chair AWARE Simcoe
<b>Anne Mills</b> Director Bert Miller Nature Club	<b>Liz Benneian</b> Chair Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara	<b>Gregor Beck</b> Senior Strategist Birds Canada	<b>Norman Wingrove</b> Past President Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation

**Mary Lou Knechtel**

*President*  
Brant Land Trust

**Amy Schnurr**

*Executive Director*  
BurlingtonGreen  
Environmental  
Association

**Kerry-Ann Charles**

*Environment Partnership  
Co-ordinator*  
Cambium Indigenous  
Professional Services

**Theresa McClenaghan**

*Executive Director*  
Canadian Environmental  
Law Association

**Kim Perrotta**

*Executive Director*  
Canadian Health Assoc.  
for Sustainability and  
Equity

**Tom Wilson**

*President*  
Carden Field Naturalists

**Peter Currier**

Catchacoma Forest  
Stewardship Committee

**Chris Darling**

*Chief Administrative  
Officer*  
Central Lake Ontario  
Conservation Authority

**Derek Coronado**

*Coordinator*  
Citizens Environment  
Alliance

**Paul Berger**

*Chair*  
Citizens United for a  
Sustainable Planet

**Michael Barkley**

*Leadership Team  
Member*  
Climate Action for  
Lifelong Learners

**Annemarie Reimer**

*Editor*  
Climate Momentum

**Angela Keller-Herzog**

*Executive Director*  
Community Associations  
for Environmental  
Sustainability - Ottawa

**Marcie Jacklin**

*President*  
Community Voices of  
Fort Erie

**Marilyn Hay**

*Chair*  
Council of Canadians,  
Kitchener Waterloo  
Chapter

**Gillian Walker**

*Chapter Contact*  
Council of Canadians,  
Ottawa Chapter

**Rachel Plotkin**

*Biodiversity Campaigner*  
David Suzuki Foundation

**Lois Gillette**

*Publicity and Past  
President*  
Durham Region Field  
Naturalists

**Darlene Salter**

*Co-chair*  
Eagle Lake Farabout  
Peninsula Coalition

**Barbara Steinhoff**

*Executive Director*  
Earthroots

**Liat Podolsky**

*Senior Scientific Advisor*  
Ecojustice

**Paul Mero**

*Executive Director*  
EcoSpark

**Ian Borsuk**

*Executive Director*  
Environment Hamilton

**Tim Gray**

*Executive Director*  
Environmental Defence

**Jarvis Strong**

*Executive Director*  
Escarpment Corridor  
Alliance

**Cathy Lapain**

*Treasurer*  
Essex County Field  
Naturalists' Club

**Geoff Kettel**

*President*  
Federation of Urban  
Neighbourhoods  
(Ontario)

**Michael Mesure**

*Executive Director*  
FLAP (Fatal Light  
Awareness Program)  
Canada

<b>Raymond Metcalfe</b> <i>Chairperson</i> Four Seasons Conservancy	<b>Core Planning Group</b> Fridays For Future Ottawa	<b>Graham Flint</b> <i>Chairman</i> Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment	<b>Susan Moore</b> <i>President</i> Friends of Salmon River
<b>Wioletta Walancik</b> <i>Administrative &amp; Programs Director</i> Friends of Second Marsh	<b>Anna Bolliger</b> <i>Stewardship and Conservation Manager</i> Friends of Wye Marsh	<b>Rupert Kindersley</b> <i>Executive Director</i> Georgian Bay Association	<b>Kevin Thomason</b> <i>Vice-Chair</i> Grand River Environmental Network
<b>Lorraine Green</b> <i>Co-chair</i> Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet (GASP)	<b>Joseph Fobister</b> <i>Lands Team</i> Grassy Narrows First Nation	<b>Richard Witham</b> <i>Chair</i> Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance	<b>Annette Gibbons</b> <i>Administrator</i> Grimsby Environmental Network
<b>Don McLean</b> <i>Steering Committee Member</i> Hamilton 350 Committee	<b>Nancy Hurst</b> <i>Conservation Director</i> Hamilton Naturalists' Club	<b>Karen Yukich</b> <i>Co-Chair</i> High Park Nature	<b>Richard Heron</b> <i>President</i> Huntsville Nature Club
<b>Christine Roberts</b> <i>President</i> Huron Fringe Field Naturalists	<b>Sheila Fleming and Peter Krats</b> <i>Co-Presidents</i> Ingersoll District Nature Club	<b>Kathryn Bakos</b> <i>Director, Climate Finance and Science</i> Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo	<b>Miranda Virtanen</b> <i>Executive Director</i> Junction Creek Stewardship Committee
<b>Eric Davis</b> <i>President</i> Kawartha Field Naturalists	<b>John Donihee</b> <i>President</i> Kingston Field Naturalists	<b>Joanie McGuffin</b> <i>Executive Director</i> Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy	<b>Nancy Vidler</b> <i>Chair</i> Lambton Shore Phragmites Community Group
<b>Mary Martin</b> <i>President</i> Lambton Wildlife Inc.	<b>Alexis Whalen</b> <i>Chair</i> Land Over Landings	<b>Marilyn Murray</b> <i>Chair</i> Lennox and Addington Stewardship Council	<b>Roger Magoon</b> <i>Member Board of Directors</i> Macnamara Field Naturalists' Club

<b>Jamie Kneen</b> National Program Co- Lead MiningWatch Canada	<b>Valerie Wilkinson</b> President Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists	<b>Emily McMillan</b> Executive Director Nature Canada	<b>Donald H. Taves</b> President Nature London
<b>Joyce Sankey</b> Conservation Director Niagara Falls Nature Club	<b>Linda Lackey</b> Communications Team Nith Valley EcoBoosters	<b>James Kamstra</b> President North Durham Nature	<b>Rhonda Kirby</b> President North Shore Environmental Resource Advocates Inc.
<b>Susan Walmer</b> Chief Executive Officer Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust	<b>Lissa Dwyer</b> Board Secretary Oak Ridges Trail Association	<b>Martin Straathof</b> Executive Director Ontario Farmland Trust	<b>Lynne Freeman</b> Director Ontario Field Ornithologists
<b>Andrew McCammon</b> Executive Director Ontario Headwaters Institute	<b>Linda Heron</b> Chair Ontario Rivers Alliance	<b>Alexander (Sandy) Donald</b> Director Ontario Wildlife Rescue	<b>Liz Benneian</b> Executive Director Ontariogreen Conservation Association
<b>Carol Ricciuto</b> Founder and Authorized Wildlife Custodian Open Sky Raptor Foundation	<b>Jakob Mueller</b> President Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club	<b>Natalija Vojno</b> Founder Our Future First	<b>Bryan Smith</b> Chair Oxford Coalition for Social Justice
<b>Cheryl Connors</b> President Palgrave Residents Association	<b>Bob Highcock</b> President Peninsula Field Naturalists	<b>Kelly McDowell</b> Coordinator Peterborough Community Medicine Garden	<b>Sue Paradisis</b> President Peterborough Field Naturalists
<b>Larry McDermott</b> Executive Director Plenty Canada	<b>Diana Abel</b> Prochyon Wildlife Centre	<b>Sonia Nobrega</b> Senior Manager Queen's University Biological Station	<b>Stephanie Sobek- Swant</b> Executive Director rare Charitable Research Reserve

<b>Claire Malcolmson</b> <i>Executive Director</i> Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition	<b>Bonnie Littley</b> <i>Co-founder</i> Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition	<b>James E. Smith</b> <i>Chair - Ruthven Park Stewardship Committee</i> Ruthven Park National Historic Site Inc.	<b>Ron Prickett</b> <i>President</i> Sault Ste. Marie Field Naturalists of Ontario and Michigan
<b>Carolanne Forster</b> <i>Co-founder</i> Save Our Streams Hamilton	<b>Letitia Charbonneau</b> <i>Convenor</i> Seniors for Climate Action Now - Ottawa	<b>Lyba Spring</b> <i>Co-chair</i> Seniors for Climate Action Now!	<b>Chevaun Toulouse</b> <i>Organization member</i> Sierra Club Canada Foundation
<b>Margaret Prophet</b> <i>Executive Director</i> Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition	<b>Nigel Finney</b> <i>Chair</i> Society of Ecological Restoration of Ontario	<b>Paul Harpley</b> <i>President</i> South Lake Simcoe Naturalists	<b>Mark Cranford</b> <i>President</i> South Peel Naturalists' Club
<b>Michelle Tom</b> <i>Co-Founder</i> Stop Sprawl HamOnt	<b>Ann Griffin</b> <i>President</i> Stratford Field Naturalists	<b>Peter Beckett</b> <i>President</i> Sudbury Naturalists	<b>Wendy Roberts</b> <i>Vice Chair</i> Sustainable Milton
<b>Bill Roesel</b> <i>President</i> The Friends of Ojibway Prairie	<b>PJ Justason</b> <i>President</i> The Friends of Temagami	<b>Rob Leverty</b> <i>President</i> The Niagara Escarpment Foundation	<b>John Davis</b> <i>Executive Director</i> The Rewilding Institute
<b>Otto Peter</b> <i>President</i> Thickson's Woods Land Trust	<b>Amelia Rose Khan</b> Toronto350	<b>Arlene Slocombe</b> <i>Executive Director</i> Water Watchers	<b>Heather Polan</b> <i>President</i> Waterloo Region Nature
<b>Anna Baggio</b> <i>Conservation Director</i> Wildlands League	<b>Mary MacDonald</b> <i>Chief Conservation Officer</i> World Wildlife Fund - Canada	<b>Gloria Marsh</b> <i>Executive Director</i> York Region Environmental Alliance	<b>Richard Berry</b> <i>President</i> York Simcoe Nature Club

Cc: Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry,  
[minister.mnrf@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mnrf@ontario.ca)  
 Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs,  
[minister.indigenousaffairs@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.indigenousaffairs@ontario.ca)