

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,

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