



February 11, 2025

Attention:

Premier Doug Ford, Leader of the PC Party of Ontario

Marit Stiles, Leader of the Ontario NDP

Bonnie Crombie, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party

Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario

Dear Ontario Party Leaders,

We are writing to seek your support in advancing wetland conservation as a proven win-win strategy to manage some of the most urgent environmental and economic issues facing Ontario in a way that benefits all Ontarians.

Specifically, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is seeking strong provincial leadership and commitment from Ontario's political party leaders to:

- 1) Develop and implement an overarching wetland policy framework in Ontario with the aim of achieving a net gain in wetlands, including a wetland offsetting policy that serves the needs of both conservation and development; and**
- 2) Substantial infrastructure investment to scale up wetland restoration efforts and address the 70% loss of wetlands in southern Ontario, including renewal and increased funding for the Wetlands Conservation Partner Program.**

For over 85 years, DUC has been Canada's leader in wetland conservation. Using sound science, DUC collaborates with landowners, government, public agencies, Indigenous communities and other partners to protect, restore and manage wetlands and associated habitats.

Wetlands are critical natural infrastructure - they deliver valuable ecosystem services including flood attenuation, water quality improvement, waste and nutrient filtration, biodiversity and wildlife habitat, carbon capture, and access to healthy outdoor spaces for people.

Investing in wetland conservation is one of the best ways to improve climate and landscape resiliency while growing our economy. **Wetlands provide billions of dollars in economic benefits to Ontarians every year** (Aziz and Van Cappellen, 2019; Institute for Sustainable Finance and Smith School of Business, 2024). Wetlands enhance and protect growing

communities and can be a tool for municipalities to adapt to climate change, attract people and business while providing greenspace for recreation.

With a long history of partnership with the Ontario government, DUC believes conserving natural infrastructure that benefits our communities and the environment for future generations is a win-win for all parties, and we look forward to working with the incoming government to improve wetland conservation outcomes.

As one of the only provinces in Canada without an overarching wetland policy framework, there is a clear opportunity for the incoming government to demonstrate leadership in wetland conservation. As part of an overarching provincial wetland policy framework, we suggest advancing the wetland related policy actions in Ontario's Flooding Strategy as well as the Auditor General's December 2024 follow up report on climate change adaptation and reducing urban flooding risk. DUC would be happy to work with relevant ministries in supporting wetland policy development.

In Ontario alone, DUC has conserved more than one million acres of vital habitat and critical natural infrastructure. Most recently under Ontario's Wetland Conservation Partnership Program DUC delivered \$14.5 million in total project value resulting in nearly 2000 hectares of restored and conserved wetlands. Continued provincial leadership and investment is needed to reverse extensive wetland losses and achieve a net gain in wetlands.

A substantial infrastructure investment in wetland restoration will help Ontario make real progress on a range of interconnected economic and environmental issues - including job creation and strengthening local economies, building community resiliency to climate change, water quality concerns, and biodiversity loss.

We look forward to your reply, and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Brock Gouweloos, Government Relations Manager for Ontario at your convenience (at b_gouweloos@ducks.ca or by phone at 705-623-6462).

Yours truly,



Marie-Paule Godin
Manager of Provincial Operations – Ontario
Ducks Unlimited Canada