

Subject: Opposition to ERO 025-0694 – Proposed Removal of Protections and Transfer of Crown Lands in Wasaga Beach

To: Premier Ford and Ministers McCarthy and Rickman:

I am writing to express serious concern regarding ERO 025-0694, which proposes removing protections from nearly one-third of Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, over 645 acres of vital wetlands, dunes, forests, and public beaches. These lands are not surplus. They are ecologically essential.

This area is both a cherished public space and critical habitat for endangered and threatened species such as the piping plover, red-sided dace, red-headed woodpecker, and Blanding's turtle. Legislative changes have already weakened Ontario's Endangered Species Act; this proposal risks further erosion of legal safeguards for species at risk.

The plan to remove Beach Areas 1, 2, New Wasaga, and Allenwood from the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act (PPCRA) would dismantle protections for some of southern Ontario's last remaining coastal wetlands. These ecosystems regulate floodwaters, store carbon, and filter pollutants. Their loss would further undermine Ontario's already diminished climate targets.

The proposal to sell Crown-owned lands to the Town of Wasaga Beach also disregards the fact that these lands are within the traditional territories of Beausoleil First Nation and the Métis Nation of Ontario. As such, no sale should proceed without free, prior, and informed consent in accordance with Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Crown lands are not municipal assets — they are held in trust for the public and for future generations.

The plan to transfer Nancy Island from PPCRA protection to the Heritage Places Act, under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, risks fragmenting the park system and weakening ecological protections. While heritage promotion is important, it must not come at the cost of ecological integrity.

Retaining Crown ownership of the lake and riverbed portions does little to mitigate the threat. Aquatic systems are interdependent with surrounding lands. Fragmenting or selling these parklands increases risks to water quality, biodiversity, and public access.

Despite widespread public concern over past attempts to develop protected lands, this pattern continues under the guise of "revitalization." These are not blank spaces for expansion; they are living systems that sustain biodiversity and climate resilience.

I urge the Ministry to withdraw this proposal in full. Protecting Wasaga Beach Provincial Park is essential to uphold Ontario's climate responsibilities, safeguard species at risk, and honour Indigenous rights.

References

1. Ontario Parks – Wasaga Beach Provincial Park
<https://www.ontarioparks.com/park/wasagabeach>

Overview of the park's natural features, recreational opportunities, and ecological significance.

2. Species at Risk in Wasaga Beach Area
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/species-risk>

Information on endangered and threatened species, including piping plover and Blandings turtle, found in Ontario.

3. Ontario's Wetlands and Climate Change
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/wetlands>

Explains the critical role wetlands play in carbon storage, flood mitigation, and biodiversity support.

4. Impact of Wetland Loss in Southern Ontario

<https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/ontario/featured-projects/ontario-wetlands.html>

Details on the significant loss of wetlands in southern Ontario and its environmental consequences.

5. Bill 5: Protecting Ontario by Unleashing Its Economy Act
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/s23005>

Summary of recent legislative changes affecting environmental protections in Ontario.

6. Climate Change Action in Ontario
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/climate-change-action-plan>

Ontario's current climate targets and progress reports.