

Premier Ford and Minister Khanjin,

I join community leaders, land users, conservationists, scientists and thousands of Canadians to call on you to protect Ontario's incredibly important northern seacoast.

This region is of hemispheric importance to birds and supports exceptionally diverse and unique marine life including polar bears, belugas, seals, fish and so much more. The Omushkego people know this better than anyone. For millennia they have relied on the healthy seacoast called Weeneebeg and Washaybeyoh for their culture and well being.

The coastline and nearby wetlands are globally recognized as an important place for many bird species to migrate and breed. Dozens of [species at risk](#) are part of the rich biodiversity fabric.

Additionally, the Omushkego 'Breathing Lands' store over 35 billion tonnes of carbon and capture an extra 6 million tonnes annually - [5 times more](#) than the Amazon - which is like removing 6.5 million cars from the road each year. Mining and exploration in these peatlands would be a major contribution to increased emissions in stark contrast to the goal of reducing emissions through electric vehicles.

There are other potential lands for EV mineral mining, and like the recent legislative developments which allow alternative energy projects in Ontario that have municipality consent, First Nations must have a say as stakeholders for any project that impacts their way of life. Alternatives with First Nation partnerships is the way forward as evidenced by the [Root Lake Lithium project](#) with the Slate Falls First Nation.

The Mushkegowuk Council has advocated for a Tribal Conservation Authority to protect this vital ecosystem since the 1980s, with Elders aiming for long-term conservation. The federal government, Quebec, and the Omushkego peoples are actively involved in protecting this vast ecosystem. Ontario has been invited to join these efforts, which could help safeguard essential carbon sink peatlands and biodiversity.

This collaboration would significantly enhance Ontario's relationship with the Omushkego people and address global climate needs, marking a pivotal moment for the province.

The time is now to work with the Omushkego and Mushkegowuk Council to safeguard approximately 1,500,000 ha of vitally important near shore, coastal areas and wetlands.

Sincerely,