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Subject: Protecting Ontario's Wetlands
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PLEASE!

We need to act now to protect wetlands in Hamilton and across Ontario!

Major Ontario wetlands are threatened by changes to their protected status in Ontario. Doug Ford's provincial Progressive Conservative government has drastically changed the long-standing Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES).

OWES was designed in 1980 as a federal-Ontario joint project and therefore the federal government must intervene to preserve it. The key outcome of establishing OWES was identifying Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) and their legislated protection. PSWs in the Hamilton area include the Beverly Swamp, the Wainfleet Bog, Fletcher Creek Fens and Cootes Paradise, all of which have been identified as "wetland complexes".

The major changes made by the Ford government to OWES include:

- Abolishing the Wetland Complexes and Locally Significant Wetland categories.
- Removing the presence of endangered species as a factor.
- Removing oversight by provincial ministries of decisions affecting wetlands.
- Eliminating input from Conservation Authorities and other recognized experts, resulting in oversight limited to municipalities without ecological expertise.
- Delegating wetland evaluation to any private company that has taken a five-day training course, the consequence of which is that developers will be able to effectively decide whether a particular wetland has any importance.

The federal government is responsible for: Protecting endangered species and fish habitats; Ensuring Indigenous rights and promoting reconciliation; Taking the lead on climate action; Providing bailouts for damage caused by major flooding and extreme weather events.

The federal government recently hosted COP 15 and signed the UN Convention on Biodiversity, committing to 30-by-30 (protection of at least 30 percent of Canada's lands and waters by 2030).

Challenging Ontario's dismantling of OWES is a must to keep this promise.

Please add your voice to demands for federal action.

Sincerely,

Ellen Tolmie

