



ONTARIO ELECTION 2022

CLIMATE CRIME # 13

Ending wetland protection: Trashing nature's clean water filter

The Ford government says it is delivering on a commitment to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, including wetlands.

Its actions belie this claim.

According to *Ontario Nature*, "wetlands are critical to water filtration, flood retention, erosion control, carbon storage, nutrient cycling and groundwater recharge."

Conservation Authorities are empowered to regulate development and activities in wetlands, watercourses, hazardous lands and other similar areas.

But in December 2020, the Ford government reduced the power of local conservation authorities. Bill 229 effectively took away the ability of authorities to deny development on wetlands by ensuring they can be overruled by non-appealable Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZOs).

Then in March, the Ford government went further introducing legislation to rewrite provincial law retroactively. Its amendments to Ontario's Planning Act nullify a key clause that limits the scope of MZOs.

This retroactive change was in advance of the Ford government's ongoing attempt to pave the way for





**SENIORS
for
CLIMATE
ACTION
NOW**

a 4 million square foot warehouse on Duffin's Creek, a provincially significant Pickering wetland. That warehouse would be the size of 45 Canadian football fields.

The government previously issued a MZO to fast track the project, strip the site of its vegetation and fill it with soil. Fortunately, pressure from environmental and citizen groups and First Nations including the Williams Treaties First Nations stopped the project and forced Pickering Council to reverse its position and the province to back down.

Now the Holland Marsh is under threat. The proposed Bradford Bypass would cross one of the most productive agricultural areas in Canada and impact 39 hectares of wildlife habitat and wetlands that species depend on. The Ford government believes no new environmental assessment is needed.

We are losing wetlands at an alarming rate, less than 30 per cent of southern Ontario's original wetlands remain, and just 10 per cent survive in Niagara and the GTA.

Ontario needs:

- !** To restore the oversight powers of conservation authorities'
- !** To rescind recent amendments to the Planning Act so that Ministerial Zoning Orders must be consistent with the Planning Act and Provincial Policy Statements.
- !** To plan with appropriate consultation as outlined in the Planning Act with municipalities and First Nations.
- !** To conduct a Federal Environmental Assessment for the Bradford Bypass project.

Sources:

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2021/03/15/pickering-wetlands-fast-tracked-for-development-by-doug-fords-government-gets-temporary-relieve.html>

<https://ecojustice.ca/conserving-ontarios-intact-wetlands-is-vital-to-protecting-biodiversity/>

<https://ontarionature.org/news-release/lower-duffins-finally-protected/>

<https://www.thelawyersdaily.ca/articles/26725>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/doug-ford-duffins-creek-wetland-pickering-ajax-warehouse-amazon-1.5942938>