



May 28, 2025

Subject: Opposition to Bill 5 and Protect Ontario's Endangered Species Act

Dear Premier Ford,
doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

I am writing on behalf of CFUW Ontario Council which is a provincial organization with 48 clubs across Ontario and 4,500 members. CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women) is a voluntary, self-funded, non-profit, non-partisan women's organization whose members seek to provide life-long learning, to improve public policy and to advocate for gender equality and for the rights of women and girls.

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding **Bill 5: "Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act"**, and its proposal to repeal the **Endangered Species Act (ESA) in Ontario**.

For nearly 20 years, the ESA has provided essential, science-based protections for Ontario's most vulnerable species and their habitats. Replacing it with the proposed **Species Conservation Act** would significantly weaken these protections at a time when biodiversity is already in crisis.

Key concerns with Bill 5 include:

- **Elimination of habitat protections** critical to the survival of species at risk. The proposed change would only protect a specific den, nest, or plant – not the larger ecosystems species depend on.
- **Removal of recovery strategies and accountability** mechanisms that ensure at-risk species receive coordinated efforts for recovery.
- **Absence of oversight for development**, allowing immediate destruction of species or habitats through online registration, with no permits, mitigation submission, or review required.
- **Political discretion over species listings**, enabling the potential for species to be removed from protection based on development pressure rather than scientific evidence.
- **Removal of the prohibition on harassment**, allowing activities that impede or indirectly harm a species to happen such as preventing nesting activity or frightening a species away from its habitat.
- **Establishing Special Economic Zones** to bypass environmental protection legislation altogether.

Real-world implications include the certain loss of critical wetland habitats for species such as the **Blanding's Turtle**, and the steady degradation of forest ecosystems required by endangered plants like **American Ginseng**. These species, among many others, cannot survive without strong habitat protection and science-led recovery planning.

I urge the Ontario Government to **cancel Bill 5 and stop the repeal of the Endangered Species Act** and instead strengthen Ontario's commitment to science-based conservation. This is not just about wildlife – it is about protecting the ecosystems that support clean water, climate resilience, and quality of life for all Ontarians.

Please uphold Ontario's responsibility to protect biodiversity for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Shaw

President (2024-2026), CFUW Ontario Council



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