

June 5th, 2014

Ontario Nature Questionnaire for Political Parties 2014 Election

Ontario NDP Response

1. Neonicotinoid pesticides have been linked to the deaths of millions of bees in Ontario and are lethal to birds and other wildlife. Seventy-eight percent of Ontario voters want these pesticides banned until their impacts are better understood. Will your party:
 - Support a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides?
 - Invest in research about pollinator-friendly farming practices and the economic value of pollinators for farmers and their crops?

We are encouraged by actions to promote the use of non-neonicotinoid pesticide-treated seeds and to promote the use of other products and deflectors, but we recognize that these actions may not be sufficient. Rather than pinning the health of Ontario's bee population on the Federal Government with their poor record on the environment, as the Liberals have done, the Ontario NDP will use science-based evidence to devise a course of action that makes sense for Ontario.

The Ontario NDP has also long been committed to farm land preservation. The loss of Ontario's most productive agricultural land is one of the greatest threats to local food and farming in Ontario. A NDP government will work with stakeholders to develop a plan that protects farmland takes account of habitat for pollinators.

2. There are over 200 species at risk in Ontario, a number that is growing every year and includes once-common species like barn swallow and monarch butterfly. Will your party:
 - Develop robust incentive and recognition programs in cooperation with the farming community to protect, enhance and restore habitat for endangered species?
 - Uphold the spirit and intent of the Endangered Species Act by revoking the exemptions handed out to the forestry, mining, hydro, pits and quarries and subdivision development industries in 2013?

The Ontario NDP supported the Endangered Species Act in 2007 and we continue to support it. We are opposed to exemptions that threaten to undermine protections for endangered and threatened species.

3. In 2015 there will be a public review of the Greenbelt, Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plans. These provincial land use plans protect natural systems that provide over \$2.3 billion per year in ecosystem benefits such as flood control, water filtration, improved air quality, waste treatment and pollination services. Will your party:
 - Ensure that the environmental protection measures that these plans provide are upheld and improved during the 2015 review?

The Ontario NDP supports the province's Biodiversity Strategy and we are committed to reaching our environmental protection targets.

4. Ontario's Ring of Fire is rich not only in minerals, but also in wildlife and other natural assets that help to control climate, clean our water and purify our air. Will your party:
 - Support a Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment that recognizes First Nations rights and interests, ensure long-term community benefits from development, and protects healthy ecosystems?

Yes, we think that communities should have more say into how resource development occurs. An Ontario NDP government will develop a planning system in the north that brings local communities and First Nations to the table in a respectful way as equal partners in the conversation. We believe that not having broad support for the process will lead to trouble in the development of the north.

We support a comprehensive Environmental Assessment process that has the authority to look at the cumulative effects of mining and infrastructure in the Ring of Fire and that incorporates full participation of First Nations and other interested stakeholders. We will follow through with the agreement between the province and Matawa-member First Nations to negotiate an approach for development in their traditional territories that will help ensure that First Nations participate in, and benefit from, Ring of Fire developments, including by seeking their participation in long-term environmental monitoring.

5. In southern Ontario alone, the benefits provided by our forests, wetlands, lakes and rivers are valued at over \$84 billion per year (study commissioned by Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources). These benefits include flood control, soil formation, water filtration and pollination. Will your party:
 - Work with private landowners, conservation authorities and municipalities to sustain these benefits for present and future generations by conserving at least 17% of the lands and waters in Ontario by 2020, as called for in Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy?

The Ontario NDP supports the province's Biodiversity Strategy and we are committed to reaching our environmental protection targets.