

Ontario Clean Air
Alliance

Ontario's Leading Environmental Groups Outline Priorities for Pre-Election year

“We’ll be reaching out to Ontarians on six environmental issues”

Toronto – Thirteen of Ontario’s leading environmental groups are joining forces to build a comprehensive environmental agenda based on six priorities in the lead-up to the provincial election, the groups announced today.

Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller’s Annual Report highlighted the extent of the environmental challenges facing Ontario, and the need for more aggressive and effective responses by the Provincial government. Climate Change, urban sprawl, the destruction of wild places, species endangerment, and air and water pollution threaten the health, safety, environment and economic well-being of Ontarians. These problems must be addressed together if Ontario is to be an environmental leader, rather than lagging behind other jurisdictions in North America and around the world.

Concrete action is needed in six priority areas:

1. Conservation of the boreal forest;
2. Implementation of a clean, green provincial electricity plan;
3. Safeguarding the Greenbelt and strengthening policies to stop urban sprawl and protect greenspace across southern Ontario;
4. Adoption of a pollution-fighting *Pollution and Cancer Prevention Act*;
5. Establishment of a Great Lakes Protection Plan and full implementation of the recommendation of the Walkerton Inquiry; and
6. A comprehensive provincial waste reduction strategy.

“We will be working together over the next year to make sure Ontarians understand the critical importance of these six issues,” said Dr. Rick Smith of Environmental Defence. “We are seeking meetings with Premier McGuinty, Mr. Tory, Mr. Hampton and Mr. de Jong to determine whether they share these priorities. And we will be looking to the government to complete some unfinished work, such as the promised modernization of the Endangered Species Act.”

“We know other jurisdictions in North America are making progress on all these issues,” said Dr. Mark Winfield of the Pembina Institute. “Ontario needs to do the same.”

“It’s remarkable – indeed unprecedented – to have so many groups come to consensus around a focused agenda like this,” said Bruce Cox of Greenpeace. “This degree of unanimity sends the clearest possible message to our political leaders as to what needs to be done to create a green future for our province.”

The solutions to the six priorities issues are:

- ❑ Protecting woodland caribou range in the boreal forest and a planning policy for Ontario's Northern Boreal region that withdraws land from further industrial allocations until land use plans, that protect the ecological and cultural values of the region, are implemented.
- ❑ Developing a clean, green electricity strategy, focused on energy efficiency, low-impact renewable energy, high-efficiency cogeneration and the completion of an orderly phase-out of existing coal and nuclear power plants. Such a strategy would include a moratorium on planning and construction of new nuclear plants and a full provincial environmental assessment of the electricity plan being developed by the Ontario Power Authority.
- ❑ Maintaining the integrity of the Greenbelt’s boundaries, linking the Greenbelt to a broader system of protected greenspaces across southern Ontario, and implementing further reforms to promote more sustainable urban development patterns including support for public transit.
- ❑ Adopting effective pollution prevention/toxics use reduction legislation to dramatically reduce cancer-causing pollution, as has been done in many U.S. States.
- ❑ Asserting provincial leadership in the protection of the Great Lakes through improved regulation, enhanced resources and the effective implementation of all the recommendations of the Walkerton Inquiry. The Great Lakes are the source of drinking water for 80% of Ontarians.
- ❑ Enacting a comprehensive provincial waste reduction strategy to achieve 60% diversion of wastes from landfill or incineration (including energy from waste) by 2008, and higher levels of diversion in future years.

“Taken together, these six priorities are an agenda for an improved standard of living for all Ontarians,” said Caroline Schultz of Ontario Nature. “We look forward to speaking with Ontarians about this agenda over the next year.”

Details regarding these priorities will soon be available on the web at www.PrioritiesforOntario.ca

For more information please contact:

Rick Smith, Environmental Defence 416-670-9521

Mark Winfield, Pembina Institute 416-978-3486 cell: 416-434-8130

Bruce Cox, Greenpeace (416) 597-8408 ext. 3012

Caroline Schultz, Ontario Nature 416-444-8419 ex. 237 cell: 416-768-9795

Ken Ogilvie, Pollution Probe (416) 926-1907 ext. 231

Leah Henderson, ForestEthics 647-883-5983

Janet Sumner, Wildlands League 416-971-9453 ext.39

Derek Stack, Great Lakes United 613-797-9532

Chris Winter, Conservation Council of Ontario 416-533-1635 ext. 1

Dan McDermott, Sierra Club of Canada Ontario Chapter 416-960-6075

Ramani Nadarajah, Canadian Environmental Law Association 416-960-2284 ext 217

Jack Gibbons, Ontario Clean Air Alliance 416-926-1907 ext. 240

Rob Wright, Sierra Legal Defence Fund 416-368-7533 ext. 31