



May 15, 2025

Public Input Coordinator – Species at Risk Protection
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Species at Risk Branch
40 St. Clair Avenue West,
Toronto, ON
M4V 1M2

Re: Conservation Ontario's comments on "Proposed interim changes to the Endangered Species Act, 2007 and a proposal for the Species Conservation Act, 2025" (ERO#025-0380)

Bill 5, the *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025* proposes interim amendments to the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (*ESA, 2007*), and later repeals the *ESA, 2007* and enacts the new *Species Conservation Act, 2025* (*SCA, 2025*), once proclaimed.

Conservation Ontario supports the connection between species at risk (SAR) protection, ecosystem resilience, and social and economic well-being.

The proposed interim amendments and enactment of the *SCA, 2025*, remove the requirement for the Province to prepare recovery strategies, management plans, and government response statements. As part of the proposed *SCA, 2025*, the Province reaffirmed a commitment to invest in SAR conservation through the new Species Conservation Program.

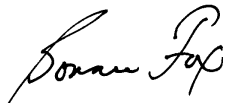
This program replaces the Species at Risk Stewardship Program and increases funding to support voluntary SAR protection and conservation activities by up to \$20 million per year. As proposed, the new program would support a wider breadth of conservation activities, including SAR habitat preservation, rehabilitation and enhancement, public education and outreach programs, and other activities to assist in the protection and conservation of species.

Conservation Ontario supports the Province's collaboration with partners and agencies to facilitate timely, targeted, on-the-ground activities contributing to SAR recovery and habitat protection. Conservation Authorities are collectively the second-largest landowner in the Province of Ontario, owning and managing a diverse portfolio of natural landscapes that support, among other objectives, SAR and their habitats. Through the proposed Species

Conservation Program, and given eligibility for funding, Conservation Authorities stand ready to prioritize activities that protect and conserve SAR and their habitat, while contributing to species recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on "Proposed interim changes to the Endangered Species Act, 2007 and a proposal for the Species Conservation Act, 2025" (ERO#025-0380). Conservation Ontario and Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities look forward to opportunities to work alongside the Province and other partners to provide continued protection, conservation and recovery for SAR and their habitat in Ontario. We would be pleased to further discuss these comments at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bonnie Fox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bonnie" and last name "Fox" clearly distinguishable.

Bonnie Fox
Policy and Planning Director

c.c. All CA CAOs/GMs