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May 15, 2025

Hon. Victor Fedeli,
Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
College Park, 777 Bay Street, 18th floor,
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1S5

RE: RTOERO Response to the proposed *Special Economic Zones Act*, 2025.

Dear Minister Fedeli,

On behalf of RTOERO, an organization representing more than 81,000 retired educators and education workers in Ontario, we're writing to express our serious concerns about the proposed *Special Economic Zones Act*, 2025.

We recognize and support the broad goals of fostering economic growth and building essential infrastructure in Ontario. That's vital to our collective prosperity. However, we also must take great care in achieving these objectives.

In this case, the proposed legislation exempts projects related to Ontario Place—and potentially other developments within newly designated “special economic zones”—from key provisions of the *Environmental Bill of Rights*, 1993. This undermines the principles of transparency, public consultation, and accountability.

Since 1968, [RTOERO](http://rtoero.ca) has been a voice for teachers, school and board administrators, educational support staff, and college and university faculty in their retirement. Our mission is to improve the lives of our members and seniors. RTOERO members, located across Ontario and other parts of Canada, have made [environmental stewardship](#) one of our key advocacy issues.

We believe that responsible use of resources, conservation, and protecting our air, land and water are all critical to a sustainable future. We need to maintain the viability of our ecosystems for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren.

In our view, the Government of Ontario is introducing an unacceptable level of discretion to bypass vital environmental protections or fast-track developments. The existing safeguards shouldn't be seen as bureaucratic barriers, but as democratic necessities.

We're troubled about setting a dangerous precedent that weakens oversight and legal recourse. That includes giving Cabinet the authority to exempt these zones and projects from any provincial law or regulation, or even from municipal by-laws.

RTOERO has long championed environmental issues such as the protection of our water supply, recycling standards, plastic waste and pollution, and sustainable transportation. Other interest groups, and members of the public overall, have their own list of concerns, from endangered species and biodiversity loss to Indigenous rights.



These concerns are all magnified when governments introduce sweeping legislation that may compromise ecosystems, bypass public input, and limit remedies for affected communities.

We shouldn't sacrifice the environmental integrity of Ontario for the sake of expediency. Prudent public policy development demands public engagement. Instead, the proposed legislation will do the opposite, removing layers of environmental oversight and altering standard assessments.

Therefore, we call on the Government of Ontario to withdraw the proposed exemptions from the *Environmental Bill of Rights* and halt the advancement of the *Special Economic Zones Act, 2025*, until we can conduct more comprehensive environmental assessments and consultations.

When it comes to environmental stewardship, governments must uphold the highest standards, not erode them. "Simplified rules" and "faster approvals", as noted under the *Special Economic Zones Act, 2025*, shouldn't translate into a lack of transparency and lax protections.

We urge you to reconsider these legislative proposals. In their place, we welcome solutions that balance economic goals with equally essential long-term sustainability and environmental integrity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Cappelletti".

John Cappelletti, Chair of the Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jim Grieve".

Jim Grieve, CEO

About [RTOERO](#):

We are a bilingual, trusted voice on healthy, active living in the retirement journey for the broader education community. With 86,000+ members in 51 districts across Canada, we are the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for education retirees. We welcome members who work in or are retired from the early years, schools and school boards, post-secondary and any other capacity in education. We believe in a better future, together!

