



The Ontario Conservation Accelerator applauds the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks for the recent announcement which proposes the creation and expansion of 43 Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves across Ontario. With demand for access to nature at an all-time high and growing crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, there has never been a greater need to grow Ontario's network of protected areas. The addition of 12,600 ha is a critically important and impactful change that benefits both Ontario's nature and residents.

As Ontario sees continued population growth, natural areas need to be managed to best protect ecological values while supporting sustainable recreation and access to nature. The Covid-19 pandemic, and more recently the renewed interest in "staycations" in Ontario, have highlighted that nature doesn't just serve local residents, but acts as an important draw for visitors who are looking for the iconic Canadian experience of the great outdoors. New and expanded Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves will be essential in maintaining reliable and sustainable access to nature. We are optimistic that these new and expanded protected areas will meet the diverse needs of Ontario through both operational and wilderness-type designations and future management plans.

The Ontario Conservation Accelerator has met with numerous private landowners who are enthusiastic about supporting the expansion of Ontario's public protected areas. We encourage the Government of Ontario to further support the creation and expansion of protected areas by creating a fund that MECP can use to collaborate with partner organizations and supportive neighbours to see even more private land additions to the Ontario Parks system, using this exciting announcement as important leverage to achieve that.

We offer our sincere congratulations and support to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks for their efforts to create and expand Ontario's protected areas. As we've seen with many of Ontario's current network of Provincial Parks, these efforts will have a positive impact for all Ontarians for generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Hendren".

Mike Hendren
Executive Director
Ontario Conservation Accelerator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristyn Ferguson".

Kristyn Ferguson
Managing Director
Ontario Conservation Accelerator