

Ducks Unlimited Canada calls on candidates to do more to conserve wetlands

We're not hearing much on environmental issues this provincial election.

Where do Ontario's party leaders and candidates stand on the significant and urgent issue of wetland loss?

Wetlands clean our air and water. They control flooding and mitigate the effects of climate change. They help maintain a cleaner environment and provide economic, social, health and cultural benefits that enhance our communities.

Yet for all this, 72 per cent of southern Ontario's large, inland wetlands have been lost or converted to other land uses. In parts of eastern Ontario, Niagara and the greater Toronto area, the loss is more than 95 per cent. Research shows that wetlands in the Golden Horseshoe and Niagara area provide Ontarians an estimated \$1.3 billion per year in ecological services.

Ontario has a patchwork of policies and regulation that protects only a fraction of our remaining wetlands. Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) has seen Great Lakes coastal wetlands drained for agricultural purposes and a large, ecologically valuable wetland in the Ottawa area recently dewatered after a petition for a municipal drain was approved.

DUC supports balanced land use planning that accommodates growth while offering priority protection for irreplaceable natural habitats. Caring about the health and prosperity of our communities means caring about wetlands.

The Ontario Liberal Party has made a commitment in their platform indicating "the loss of wetlands and farmland will be reversed." For DUC and our more than 27,000 supporters across the province, this is an encouraging start. Where do the other parties stand on wetland loss?

This issue demands the attention of all political parties hoping to form the next government.

Ontario's environmental, social and economic well-being 30 years from now depends on political action today. A vote for wetlands is a vote for the future.

We're calling on all parties to do more to conserve Ontario's wetlands.

Lynette Mader,

Manager of Provincial Operations ? Ontario,

Ducks Unlimited Canada