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## Environmental Groups Set the Bar for Ontario Political Parties

### *Groups outline action priorities for the province*

Toronto - A group of leading Ontario environmental organizations today released detailed policy agendas for the province in six key areas: boreal forest protection, toxics, energy, Great Lakes protection, waste and recycling, and urban sprawl and the Greenbelt. The priorities are described on the newly launched Priorities for Ontario website at [www.PrioritiesforOntario.ca](http://www.PrioritiesforOntario.ca)

"We've developed these easily understood priorities to help both voters and political leaders understand what needs to be done to ensure a healthy, prosperous future for Ontario," explains Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director of Environmental Defence, one of the 13 groups that combined efforts on the project.

"We believe that these priorities should be at the centre of any political platform meant to address the very real threats to the health and prosperity of Ontario residents posed by climate change, loss of wild habitat, pollution and urban sprawl," says Dr. Mark Winfield, Director of Environmental Governance, Pembina Institute.

Representatives from the 13 organizations have met with the leaders of the four major Ontario parties to deliver the message that the environment should be a central focus for all parties. "We've had a positive reception," says Bruce Cox, Executive Director of Greenpeace, "but we are still waiting to see how the parties intend to actually follow through on our recommendations. And we are not going to be satisfied with feel-good statements and vague promises – the time for action is now."

In fact, the organizations are already working on mobilizing their combined memberships to push for action on the six priorities. "Our members, like most of the public, are ahead of many political leaders in understanding that cleaning up our environmental act can have big economic, health and societal benefits," points out Caroline Schultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature.

"These priorities are central to the future of this province. They can form the backbone of an effective and workable plan to create a healthy and sustainable society or they can be ignored at our collective loss," concludes Janet Sumner, Executive Director of CPAWS Wildlands League.

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The 13 groups who are collaborating on the Priorities for Ontario ([www.PrioritiesforOntario.ca](http://www.PrioritiesforOntario.ca)) project are:

Environmental Defence – [www.environmentaldefence.ca](http://www.environmentaldefence.ca)  
 Pembina Institute – [www.pembina.org](http://www.pembina.org)  
 Greenpeace – [www.greenpeace.ca](http://www.greenpeace.ca)  
 Ontario Nature – [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org)  
 Pollution Probe – [www.pollutionprobe.org](http://www.pollutionprobe.org)  
 Forest Ethics – [www.forestethics.ca](http://www.forestethics.ca)  
 CPAWS Wildlands League – [www.wildlandsleague.org](http://www.wildlandsleague.org)  
 Sierra Club of Canada - Ontario Chapter – [www.ontario.sierraclub.ca](http://www.ontario.sierraclub.ca)  
 Canadian Environmental Law Association – [www.cela.ca](http://www.cela.ca)  
 Ontario Clean Air Alliance – [www.cleanairalliance.org](http://www.cleanairalliance.org)  
 Sierra Legal Defence Fund – [www.sierralegal.ca](http://www.sierralegal.ca)  
 Great Lakes United – [www.glu.org](http://www.glu.org)  
 Conservation Council of Ontario – [www.greenontario.org](http://www.greenontario.org)

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Environmental Defence was formerly known as the Canadian Environmental Defence Fund.  
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