

For Immediate Release  
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## **MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO'S SPECIES AT RISK**

*Proposed Legislation Among Strongest In North America*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is introducing proposed legislation that, if passed, would make Ontario a North American leader in species at risk protection and recovery, Natural Resources Minister David Ramsay announced today.

“The proposed legislation we are introducing today sets a gold standard for protection and recovery of species at risk and represents a new era of natural heritage protection in Ontario,” said Ramsay. “By working to reverse the rate of species decline in our province, we will ensure that future generations of Ontarians benefit from a healthier and diverse natural environment.”

More effective legislation is just one component of a comprehensive, three-part approach to species at risk protection announced today that also includes the programs and policies to implement the new legislation, and support for public stewardship initiatives.

“We are proposing a comprehensive, three-part approach to provide an improved legislative framework for species and habitat protection, and also encourage greater stewardship involvement from landowners, resource users and conservation organizations,” said Ramsay. “We further propose to back up our commitment to greater stewardship with funding of \$18 million over four years to promote stewardship activities protecting essential habitat and green space.”

Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species – all important to the biological, social and economic vitality of the province. At present, more than 175 of these species are identified as being at risk, which means they may disappear from the province if their rate of decline continues.

If passed by the Legislature, the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007 would:

- Broaden the scope of Ontario’s existing Endangered Species Act and strengthen protection and recovery measures
- Provide greater accountability to the public and demonstrate clear results
- Include the necessary provisions to support protection within the context of sustainable development.

The Ontario government consulted extensively with the public, Aboriginal organizations and a wide range of stakeholder groups before drafting the legislation. These groups included land developers, environmentalists, rural communities, fish and wildlife enthusiasts, municipalities and resource industry sectors.

“This is the first time since the Endangered Species Act was passed in 1971 that our laws protecting species at risk have undergone a thorough review,” said Ramsay. “We asked Aboriginal representatives, our partners, stakeholders, the Endangered Species Act Review Advisory Panel and the Ontario public for their views and they have indicated strong support for better species at risk legislation. We thank those who have provided input.”

The proposed legislation is just one way the McGuinty government is protecting Ontario’s natural heritage. Other initiatives include:

- Launching Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy
- Protecting 1.8 million acres of greenspace in the Greenbelt, providing a safe habitat for 66 species at risk
- Working with an alliance of organizations through the Natural Spaces program to develop the tools, incentives and on-the-ground activities that will encourage and support private landowners in conserving natural areas on their land.

For more information about the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, please visit the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry at [www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry](http://www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry) and enter Registry Number AB06E6001.

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Note to Editors: B Roll available on request.

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