



For immediate release

Over 50 organizations speak out against the gutting of environmental laws in Ontario's budget bill

Endangered species, provincial parks, and cottage country lakes all put at risk

Toronto, May 10, 2012 – As debate over the Liberal budget bill (Bill 55, *Strong Action for Ontario Act*) continues at Queen's Park, more than 50 Ontario-based environmental and other non-profit organizations have submitted an open letter to Premier McGuinty, calling on the Province to withdraw all amendments in the bill that impact Ontario's environmental legislation.

Signatories to the letter say amendments to existing environmental protection laws must be debated separately. "Burying changes that weaken protection for our wildlife and ecosystems in a budget bill is unacceptable," says Anne Bell, Director of Conservation and Education for Ontario Nature, one of the groups spearheading the drive to remove the amendments. "This way, the public has no chance of exercising their democratic right to participate in far reaching changes that will impact us and future generations."

Normally, proposed amendments to environmental legislation must follow a statutory process and be posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry so that members of the public may comment on them. The provincial government has bypassed this legislative requirement by inserting its amendments in an omnibus bill that is hundreds of pages in length and is not subject to the same degree of public scrutiny.

Says Catharine Grant, Boreal Campaigner with Greenpeace Canada, "This government should be defending its environmental legislation, not undermining it by sneaking in changes through a budget bill. Adding multiple loopholes and exceptions to the rule, means our environment will be protected in name only."

Among the groups asking that all proposed amendments to environmental legislation be removed from Bill 55 are Ontario Nature, Greenpeace Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

To read the Letter to Premier McGuinty with the entire list of signatories, click here: www.ontarionature.org/protect/campaigns/endangered_species.php

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Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing more than 30,000 members and supporters and 140 member groups across Ontario (charitable registration # 10737 8952 RR0001).

Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force the solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future. Greenpeace's goal is to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity.