



Gutting MNR: Lowered Standards, Dangerous Risks

Toronto, October 10, 2013 – Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller says the Ontario government is deliberately dismantling environmental protection that's been built up over the past decades under the guise of what's been called "MNR transformation."

In his 2012/13 Annual Report "*Serving the Public*," Gord Miller says the changes to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) "cast doubt on the ministry's ability to properly manage and protect Ontario's natural environment. It appears that the Ministry of Natural Resources is walking away from many parts of its job to safeguard wildlife and natural resources." Important legal safeguards for provincial parks, species at risk, hunting, and Crown lands have been significantly weakened.

Miller says budget cuts and regulatory changes have reduced MNR's effectiveness, not made it more efficient:

- [Protections for at-risk species have been gutted as major industrial activities can now proceed almost unchecked](#) (section 2.1)
- [Provincial parks are being transformed into revenue streams, rather than nature reserves](#) (section 4.6)
- [No formal environmental monitoring program exists for the Far North in the face of intensive mineral exploration and development](#) (Section 3.1)
- [No funding plan or action plan exists to tackle the growing threat of invasive species such as the emerald ash borer and the Asian carp](#) (Section 4.2)

"In an analysis of five provinces," says Miller, "all five, including British Columbia, Manitoba, and Alberta, spend more per capita than Ontario. Ontario spends less of its total budget, and ranks last as well when it comes to the percentage of GDP that is spent on natural resource management and environmental protection."

"The government is sending a strong message that the public should lower its expectations about what MNR will do to sustainably manage the province's natural resources," says the Environmental Commissioner. "Cuts to MNR's core laws and regulations, cuts to staff, and cuts to programs will indeed transform the ministry. These short-sighted changes to MNR will potentially have disastrous results for our province's natural heritage."



Gord Miller, B.Sc, M.Sc
Commissioner

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Commissaire

The Environmental Commissioner firmly believes that protecting Ontario's natural resources is one of the profound responsibilities of the provincial government. "The changes at MNR are regressive and pose significant ecological risks," says Miller. "When we start to treat nature and species like a bunch of widgets in a factory, we've completely lost sight of what's truly important for our communities and our very identity as Ontarians."

Read the chapter "[The Abdication of Natural Resources Management by MNR.](#)"

Download the Environmental Commissioner's full 2012/2013 Annual Report, "[Serving the Public.](#)"

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*The **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario** is the province's independent environmental watchdog. Appointed by the Legislative Assembly, the ECO monitors and reports on compliance with the Environmental Bill of Rights, the government's progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and its actions towards achieving greater energy conservation in Ontario.*