



Gord Miller, B.Sc, M.Sc
Commissioner

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Commissaire

Ontario Government Missing in Action to Halt the Loss of Biodiversity

Toronto, January 10, 2012 – The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario says the Government of Ontario must come up with a new strategy to stem the continuing decline in Ontario's species and natural spaces. In a special report released today, "*Biodiversity: A Nation's Commitment, an Obligation for Ontario*," Gord Miller says unless Ontario and all other provinces take action, the international commitments made by the federal government will be meaningless.

"The Ontario government did adopt a Biodiversity Strategy in 2005," says Gord Miller. "Unfortunately, it expired in 2010, and the government has so far chosen not to adopt an updated plan. Our government cannot avoid its obligation," says Miller, "to guide Ontario's response to this urgent crisis."

In 2010, Canada met with almost 200 nations in Nagoya, Japan and agreed on 20 biodiversity conservation targets that should be achieved by 2020. But the Commissioner says most of the constitutional responsibility for meeting these targets lies with Ontario and the other provincial governments. "Efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity must be implemented at the provincial level if they are to be effective. And Ontario won't be able to do that unless it has a new Biodiversity Strategy."

In Ontario, the most significant threats to the province's species and natural spaces are habitat degradation, climate change, invasive species, overexploitation and pollution. The Commissioner has previously warned about the lack of action to safeguard the province's 200 species at risk such as snapping turtles, cougars, and Jefferson salamanders. Gord Miller has said the government also needs to address the threats from invasive species like Asian carp, and protect wetlands and woodlands in southern Ontario.

The Environmental Commissioner says, "the federal government has promised, during the current *International Decade for Biodiversity*, to conserve biodiversity on behalf of all Canadians." It is imperative that the Government of Ontario acts quickly and come up with a plan to implement those commitments. This requires a new Biodiversity Strategy. Rhetoric alone will not suffice."

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The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is appointed by the Legislative Assembly to be the province's independent environmental watchdog, reporting publicly on the government's environmental decision making.

Download the special report "*Biodiversity: A Nation's Commitment, an Obligation for Ontario*" at <http://www.eco.on.ca/>

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