

June 17, 2008

Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty,

The woodland caribou is an iconic Canadian species, and a symbol of Ontario's wilderness. Sadly, this symbolic and ecologically significant species has faced dramatic decline in the last century due to industrial development, and scientists now predict that it may become extirpated from Ontario within this century if the current rate of habitat loss continues.

Last year, the new Endangered Species Act (ESA) passed by your government was heralded by non-government organizations as the best species-at-risk legislation in Canada. We were particularly pleased that the Act made provisions for habitat protection and prioritized woodland caribou conservation by fast-tracking regulations for the species and we continue to support the ESA as a critical piece of legislation to halt biodiversity loss in Ontario.

We are, however, deeply disappointed by your government's recent proposal to exempt forestry from the ESA for the next year. Forestry constitutes one of the largest threats to woodland caribou. In fact, caribou have lost 34 kilometres of range every decade in Ontario, largely due to the northward expansion of forest operations. Under the current system, government-approved forest management plans would allow logging of one million hectares of caribou habitat. The status quo needs to change if caribou are to survive in Ontario and we believe that an exemption for forestry contravenes the spirit of the new ESA.

During the last election campaign, you promised to "implement our nation-leading Endangered Species Act, beginning with a plan to protect large scale areas for caribou habitat in the Boreal Forest." We urge your government to follow through on this promise and take tangible and decisive action to prevent decline of woodland caribou by:

1. Not exempting logging from the ESA
2. Protecting large scale areas for caribou habitat, beginning with an immediate halt to logging and road building in intact caribou habitat

This would ensure that you deliver on this important election promise as it would allow options to remain available while a comprehensive habitat regulation for caribou is developed.

We hope that you will take seriously your commitment to all of Ontario's species-at-risk –and woodland caribou in particular—and act now to protect their habitat.

Sincerely,

Andrew Kellman
Anita Caveney, President
Anne Lewis, President
Anne Mitchell, Executive Director
Arlene Montgomery, Program Director

Halton/North Peel Naturalists Club
McIlraith Field Naturalists Club
Six Mile Conservationists Club
Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy
Friends of the Wild Swan

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Naturalized Habitat Network
Sierra Club Ontario
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