



ROTARY ROSTER: The Rotary Club of Acton kicked off the beginning of a new Rotary Year with a change of officers at a barbecue at last Tuesday's meeting (right photo). Dick Crane (right), the new president of the Rotary Club of Acton, took over the "gavel" from retiring President Robert Bedard. – Submitted photo



Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Ontario's endangered wildlife dodged a bullet (and a bulldozer) recently, when the provincial government reversed its decision to gut the province's world-class Endangered Species Act with a raft of amendments stuffed into a controversial omnibus budget bill.

Legal experts, former politicians, and environmentalists, including me, had expressed concern about Bill 55's damaging revisions to several environmental laws in the province, most notably the Endangered Species Act. The changes would have undermined public management of cherished forests, lakes, and rivers, as well as protection of some of the most vulnerable species in Canada. Many of those plants and animals are clinging to survival, including woodland caribou, American ginseng, shortnose cisco

fish, piping plovers, and wood turtles.

More than 50 labour, health, and environmental groups submitted a joint letter to the government in defence of the Endangered Species Act. They were joined by thousands of Ontario residents who wrote to Premier Dalton McGuinty, urging him to change his mind.

Thankfully, he listened. At the 11th hour, government members on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs voted to remove amendments from Bill 55 that would have eviscerated the act.

While Ontario's environmental laws remain vulnerable to politics, I'm relieved that legislators were able to come together to maintain strong legal protection for the diversity of nature and life that provides us with immeasurable benefits.

With their vote of confidence for the Endangered Species Act, politicians in Ontario helped sustain one of the few outcomes of an important global environmental agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity. Its 20th anniversary was celebrated in June at Rio+20, more formally known as the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, a major international gathering in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Two decades ago, the Convention on Biological Diversity, along with two other important international agreements (the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Agenda 21, which eventually spawned the UN Convention to Combat Desertification), were signed by more than 170 nations at the first Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio in May 1992.

Commonly referred to as the Earth Summit, the first

Rio conference attempted to establish a strong global mandate for collective action to safeguard the Earth's biodiversity and climate.

Though the agreements signed in 1992 lacked any real teeth, they established international processes for monitoring biodiversity decline, creating new parks and protected areas, and catalyzing domestic policy developments, including the adoption of laws for protection and recovery of species threatened with extinction.

Canada was the first industrialized nation to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity. Soon after, the federal government entered into an agreement with the provinces called the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk. Thanks to the accord, almost all of Canada's provinces and territories have enacted or overhauled wildlife legislation to protect species at risk within their borders – except for Alberta and

British Columbia.

Losing the Endangered Species Act in Ontario while world leaders met again to try to save the biosphere would have set a horrible precedent for global protection of biodiversity and would have solidified Canada's growing reputation as an international laggard (a reputation that wasn't helped by our federal environment minister's actions and statements in Rio this year).

The first Rio Earth Summit was marked by grandiose rhetoric and commitments by politicians who ultimately failed to deliver on their promises. Twenty years later, the world confronts a biosphere even more severely damaged by millions of acres of destroyed forests, two billion more people, and atmospheric carbon concentrations nearing tipping-point levels. And yet, while experts tell us the first Rio Earth Summit clearly failed to

protect the biosphere, it did provide impetus for creating and strengthening domestic institutions and instruments, like Ontario's Endangered Species Act and other important environmental laws and policies.

There's a lesson from the successful fight to save environmental laws in Ontario: The public must remain vigilant and continue to compel our politicians to act if we are to have any hope of stemming the biodiversity crisis here at home and across the planet.

The government of Ontario listened to public concerns. I remain hopeful that the province's political leaders will keep the ESA intact. Legal protection of wildlife and its vulnerable habitat has never been more critical.

Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation Terrestrial Conservation and Science Program director Faisal Moola.

Acton Nails & Spa
Professional Nail Care for Ladies & Gentlemen

Completely Renovated!

Free personal box
Free hotstone massage with Pedicure

- Tuesday - Seniors 20% OFF
- Wednesday - Men 20% OFF

374 Queen St. East
Acton
Tel: (519)853-9538

Mon-Fri 10:00 - 7:30pm
Sat 9:30 - 6:00pm
Sun 12:00 - 5:00pm

walk-ins welcome

*Doris Daby's
Surprise 90th Birthday*

Please join the family
at a Celebration
on **Saturday July 7th**

At: **Ladies Lounge
Acton Legion**

From: **1pm to 3pm**

Best Wishes Only Please

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."
St. John 4:23 KJV

Mount Zion Full Gospel Deliverance Ministries Inc.

Pastor Andrew Paton
Mount Zion Full Gospel Deliverance Ministries
Sunday at 11:00am • Counseling available
Preaching the Kingdom of God, the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and God's plan for your life.

Our Church is located at the Ballinafad
Community Center, Downstairs
For more information call
519-853-5657