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OPINION

THIS ELECTION, VOTE WITH CLIMATE AND NATURE IN MIND

OUR LIVES, AND THOSE OF OUR CHILDREN, DEPEND ON A HEALTHY PLANET, WRITES GIDEON FORMAN



GIDEON FORMAN
Column

Many Ontarians are focused on the cost of living now, and that's understandable.

But when you cast your ballot in the June 2 provincial election, please remember that our very lives — and the lives of our children — depend on a healthy planet.

The David Suzuki Foundation hopes that when you vote, you'll keep the climate crisis and protection of nature top of mind.

There are some issues to consider as you begin thinking about which candidate you want to support.

PROTECTING GREEN SPACE

Here in southern Ontario we're blessed with the Greenbelt, an extraordinary landscape of farms, rivers and forests abutting one of Canada's most densely populated regions.

If you've spent time walking its trails, as I have, you know how marvelous it is.

Its trees capture carbon and help us tackle the climate crisis; its cool streams provide habitat

for fish and wildlife; its farmlands grow succulent fruit. But our Greenbelt is under threat because the Ontario government is planning to pave part of it with Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. These unnecessary highways will waste billions of dollars and make congestion worse: new roads inevitably mean more cars and driving. If you're concerned about our Greenbelt, it's crucial that you vote on June 2.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Scientists urge us to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and shift to alternatives such as solar and wind power.

These energy sources — abundant in many parts of Ontario — don't create carbon pollution but they do create local employment.

A few years back, the province's renewables sector was starting to take off and investor confidence was high.

But in 2018 the Ontario government cancelled more than 750 renewable energy contracts, saddling Ontarians with more than \$230 million in cancellation costs. If you're concerned about this loss of jobs and emissions-free power, it's crucial that you vote on June 2.

PROTECTING SPECIES AT RISK

The animals and plants

that live in Ontario enrich our lives with their beauty and song and have intrinsic worth quite apart from the joy they bring human beings.

But more than 230 species in the province are now at risk of disappearing. Threatened creatures include Blanding's turtle — with its brilliant yellow chin — and the bobolink, a magnificent bird that can fly as far as 1,800 kilometres in a day.

You'd think the Ontario government would do all it could to save at-risk species while it still can. But the province's record in this area is poor. In a recent report, Ontario's auditor general wrote, "Our audit found that the Environment Ministry is failing in its mandate to protect species at risk."

If you're concerned about losing some of our animal friends forever, it's crucial that you vote on June 2.

We know Ontarians feel strongly about these issues.

A recent EKOS poll found 85 per cent of us agree the province should do more to protect forests and wildlife. (Interestingly, in the 905 region the figure climbs to 87 per cent!)

But the challenge is electing politicians who will respect our wishes and make laws that actually preserve nature and reduce emissions.

It's something to think about as you decide which candidate gets your vote.

Gideon Forman is a climate change policy analyst at the David Suzuki Foundation.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR TODAY!