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March 19, 2003

Ms. Anne Bell, Mr. Tony Iacobelli and Mr. Gregor Beck
Partnership for Public Lands
380-401 Richmond Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5V 3A8

Dear Ms. Bell, Mr. Iacobelli and Mr. Beck:

Thank you kindly for your letter of January 21, 2003, regarding the need to end the Harris-Eves government's neglect of Ontario's natural heritage. I was pleased to discuss these issues recently with Anne and Jim Faught at a dinner attended by executive directors of various environmental organizations. I also understand you have been meeting with my staff and our caucus critics.

I strongly believe that protecting Ontario's unique natural spaces and wildlife is essential to the health and well-being of our future generations. It is also crucial for the conservation of biodiversity. I have had a lifelong interest in our natural areas that only grows stronger with each summer's canoe trip with my children.

I agree wholeheartedly that the Harris-Eves government has failed to protect Ontario's natural areas and wildlife. The initial promise of Lands for Life is now giving way to proposals for roads, quarries, golf courses and "recreational reserves" in these supposedly protected areas. The Conservatives have encouraged sprawl and the paving of vital wetlands and woodlots in southern Ontario. As you note, even the criticism of the Provincial Auditor and Environmental Commissioner has failed to incite government action.

Ontario Liberals will end these eight years of environmental neglect that have made our province an international embarrassment. We will put Ontario back on the map as a world-class leader in environmental preservation and protection. Key natural heritage and wildlife protection priorities for our new government include:

- We will initiate a full public review of Ontario's *Provincial Parks Act*. We will make natural protection the first priority for an updated Parks Act. We will also scrap Ernie Eves' proposal to create meaningless "recreational reserves" instead of truly protected provincial parks. Ontario's parks are some of the most beautiful and environmentally significant lands in the world. They deserve to be protected for future generations.
- We will update and strengthen Ontario's *Endangered Species Act*. Our new Act will put in place effective measures to protect species at risk, including a science-based process to list species and help them recover, and meaningful protection for habitats. Protection of species is virtually meaningless unless there are also protections for the areas where they live, feed and breed.

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- We will institute meaningful, broad-scale land-use planning for Ontario's Northern Boreal Forest before any new major development, including ensuring full participation by native communities. Land use planning must protect the ecological integrity of this natural treasure and help to provide a sustainable future for native people and northern communities.
- We will end the Harris-Eves policy of allowing unlimited size clearcuts in Ontario. These massive clearcuts cause irreparable damage to our forests.
- There have been no efforts to determine wolf population numbers in Ontario or the impact of hunting on these numbers. We will implement a proper wildlife management program for Ontario's wolves. We will ensure that Ontario gets the vital scientific information it needs to protect and manage wolves.

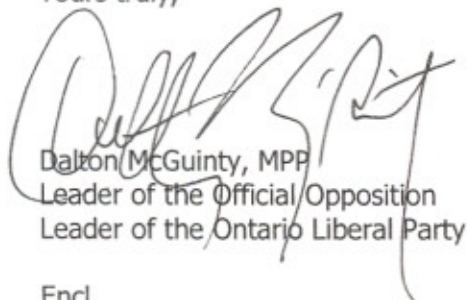
In addition to the above commitments, many of the central elements of *Growing Strong Communities*, our plan to protect Ontario's environment, will provide significant protections for our natural heritage by:

- Containing sprawl and protecting threatened vital natural areas by creating a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. The new Greenbelt will start by linking and giving real protection to the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine. It will also add important new areas, such as the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve, a Bronte Creek Provincial Park-Escarpment corridor and two-thirds of the provincially owned Seaton lands.
- Protecting one million acres of greenspace and farmland to ensure that future generations have natural areas to enjoy close to our urban and suburban centres. To protect these lands from development, we will use a wide array of creative solutions, including tax credits, easements, land trusts, land swaps and new park designations.
- Ensuring water source protection, including passing a law to enhance the protection of the lands and wetlands that surround our vital watersheds.
- Changing the *Planning Act* to ensure that municipal planning and Ontario Municipal Board decisions are consistent with provincial rules to protect our natural spaces, wetlands and woodlands.
- Creating an Environmental Youth Corps that will employ youth in areas such as protecting and rehabilitating natural habitats.

I have included a copy of our *Growing Strong Communities* platform for your review.

Ontarians deserve to live and work in communities where the environment contributes to our health and quality of life, not threatens them. I look forward to working with the Partnership for Public Lands in implementing these commitments as the head of a new Ontario Liberal Government.

Yours truly,



Dalton McGuinty, MPP
Leader of the Official Opposition
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party

Encl.

cc: Mr. Monte Hummel, President, World Wildlife Fund Canada
Mr. Jim Faught, Executive Director, Federation of Ontario Naturalists
Mr. Evan Ferrari, Director of Parks and Protected Areas Program, Wildlands League