

With economist Don Drummond ready to present his report to the Liberals on how to reduce the deficit it is not much of a stretch that the Ministry of Natural Resources and the programs that preserve, protect and restore the natural resources of Ontario will again be subject to cuts. No one should be surprised, as the Liberals have already gutted the MNR to the point where the Ministry is only a shadow of its former self and incapable of doing much to protect, preserve or restore anything. At a time when the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's report, "Biodiversity, A Nation's Commitment, Ontario's Obligation," highlights the Liberal government's neglect of its duty to protect and conserve the biological, ecological and genetic diversity of the natural resources of Ontario. The Liberals cannot be allowed to further degradate Ontario's Natural resources.

There are some serious issues threatening the natural resources of this gorgeous province and country we are so fortunate to live in. Those of us concerned with the well being of our natural resources need to be vigilant and demand that these concerns are addressed in 2012. It is far too easy to fall into that complacency that politicians and bureaucrats hope for and allow them by our quiet to continue to ignore or do too little or nothing to solve the problems.

In the Great Lakes the threat of the invasion of the Asian carp has not gone away. The real threat of the carp entering the Great Lakes via the Chicago waterway from the Mississippi and utterly destroying the \$7 billion fishing industry and \$16 billion recreational industry still exists.

The invasion of all kinds of invasive species both plants and animals into Ontario's natural environment and the inability or the lack of resolve in dealing with everything from the ash beetle to the spiny water flea should be a formidable concern. Ontario at present conducts a program that tells you when an invasive species has arrived. By then it is too late. Wouldn't you think it imperative to keep the invaders out?

In Northern Ontario the MNR's policy of restricting public access to crown lands so that American tourists can enjoy a wilderness experience has deprived local communities of traditional areas used for hunting, fishing, hiking and even berry picking. Crown land by law belongs to all the citizens of Ontario and restricting access to a few is illegal. The MNR Public consultation process that is used to excuse the flawed policy is a joke.

Open water fish farms on the coast of British Columbia have not only been found to introduce pollution and parasitic lice to the Pacific wild salmon but the raising of Atlantic Salmon has been shown to be responsible for the introduction of ASI virus into the wild salmon. The potential ecological disaster is serious enough but is overshadowed by the revelations at the Cohen Commission that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have been complicit in trying to cover up the scientific evidence of the presence of the ASI virus in the wild salmon stocks. If this can happen in BC do you really trust the explanation by the MNR that the die off of fish and birds at Wasaga Beach was a natural phenomenon caused by botulism?

The natural resources of Canada and Ontario are far too important to be ignored. Any resource cannot be sustainable if all you do is continue to take from it. A commitment from the Province of Ontario and the Federal Government to protect, preserve and restore our natural resources is way overdue.