



## **PLENTY CANADA**

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Lanark, ON K0G 1K0**

November 4, 2016

Anne Bell  
Director of Conservation and Education, Ontario Nature  
214 King Street West, Suite 612  
Toronto, ON M5H 3S6

Dear Anne,

Thank you for preparing comments to the proposed Ontario Wetlands Strategy for submission to the Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Plenty Canada, an Indigenous registered charity, fully endorses the comments that have been prepared by Ontario Nature.

Wetlands are very important to our Indigenous responsibilities because they protect our first medicine, water, found in the wombs of our Mothers at conception and comprising the majority of our body composition as humans and one of the sacred elements of all life.

Our waters in Ontario and indeed throughout the world have been under assault through pollution. Yes, we have made some progress in some circumstances. That said, the overall circumstance of Ontario's waters is unacceptable, not only for current life, but for future generations. As Indigenous peoples, it is our sacred responsibility to use the gifts of life responsibly, without damaging the opportunities of future generations.

Our shared comments come from extensive discussions, encompassing both Indigenous traditional knowledge and western science epistemologies and our diverse cultural histories. They also reflect our responsibilities, recognized by section 4 of the Ontario Provincial Policy Statement, which recognizes section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I share my experience as a former Ontario Human Rights Commissioner and member of the Rural and Small Town Advisory Committee to the Ontario Royal Commission on Land Use Planning Reform.

We have to take great care and action to reverse the destructive trajectory understood at the 1992 Earth Summit, which I attended, as an Indigenous delegate from Canada. The Summit gave birth to 3 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA's) of which Climate Change and the Convention On Biological Diversity are the most significant to the people of Ontario.

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We must also be guided by the precautionary principle, which acknowledges the interconnected quality of all life, a significant factor of natural law and the limits of Mother Earth to host life upon her. This interconnection is the underpinning of my Algonquin responsibilities, and law known as Ginowaydaganuc. The interconnection also serves as the most fundamental reason that Indigenous peoples are represented in the centre of the Welcoming and Friendship belt, carried previously by now deceased Algonquin Elder, William Commanda. He carried this belt and others, historic records of our shared history, with him to national discussions during the Constitutional process, prior to 1982, and several times thereafter, to remind us that “all who benefit from this land have the responsibility to protect it.”

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Larry McDermott  
Executive Director  
Plenty Canada