

## Ontario's Natural Resources Deserve Better

I recall being taken aback to the response a Ministry of Natural Resources biologist gave a heckler when he was reminded that he was a public servant and his salary was being paid out of taxes paid by the public. "Well here is the nickel your taxes pays." The reply just didn't cut it! But it does exemplify an attitude that permeates the Ontario MNR and must end.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is a public service. As such the Ministry and the politicians who are supposed to direct the Ministry need to pay attention to the concerns of the public. Endless cuts to MNR staff and budgets, locked doors on MNR offices, no gas for conservation officers trucks, land use plans that do not include local involvement, fisheries and wildlife management plans that do not use input from local expertise and the most glaring inadequacy... no public accountability.

All of the issues above occurred under the present McGinty Liberal government in Toronto. I'd be the first to agree that the cuts by the Harris Tories made the MNR a shadow of its former self but in the time the Liberals have been in power the MNR has been gutted to the point of irrelevance.

I believe that the MNR is charged with protecting, preserving, restoring and improving the natural resources of the province of Ontario for the citizens of Ontario and for future citizens of Ontario. How can you protect and preserve with too few conservation officers to cover the areas and no gas for their trucks? Why is the only restoring or improving of natural resources accomplished by volunteer organizations? Why are volunteer organizations impeded rather than facilitated? Very simply, it costs money to preserve, protect, restore and improve our natural resources. Our Provincial Government has given no importance to an industry that provides in excess of 3 billion a year to the economy of Ontario. One has to look no further than the states bordering our great lakes for examples of governments who get it and provide the financial support necessary to protect, preserve, restore and improve their natural resources for the benefit of their citizens.