

# ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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*Ontario Conservation Centre*

OFAH FILE: 450  
May 1, 2020

Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Room 281  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

Subject: Reopening Ontario for Outdoor Recreation after COVID-19

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) is Ontario's largest, non-profit, fish and wildlife conservation-based organization, representing 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters, and 725 member clubs. We have reviewed the government's plans to gradually reopen the province outlined in the *Framework for Reopening our Province* and respectfully request that you consider opening public boat launches and marinas in Stage 1 of the process.

The OFAH acknowledges the need for unprecedented measures imposed by your government to safeguard public health from the threat of COVID-19. The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA) and associated emergency orders appear to be successful in slowing the spread of COVID-19, and we anticipate continued improvement over the coming weeks.

Recreational fishing is a safe heritage activity that is suited to people of almost any age and across a range of physical abilities. Outdoor nature-based activities like fishing and hunting provide social, physical and mental health benefits. These benefits have taken on renewed importance during the unique situation we find ourselves in.

We appreciate the government's approach of allowing spring fishing and hunting seasons to remain open, but many anglers (and some hunters) have not been able to participate, because of access closures. Despite being low-risk activities, many other anglers and hunters have willingly sacrificed their time afield out of an abundance of caution and respect for public health recommendations. Like all Ontarians, anglers and hunters are understandably anxious to return to the outdoors.

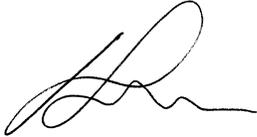
To help kickstart Ontario's economy, we strongly urge you and the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee to consider opening marinas and public boat launches in Stage 1 of the reopening process. We are confident that anglers, armed with proper guidance from public health officials, can continue to participate in a manner that does not jeopardize the progress we have made against COVID-19 and within the bounds of remaining emergency orders (e.g. the prohibition on social gatherings of more than five people).

We also request that you consider opening Crown land camping, as well as access to provincial parks and conservation reserves (even if it is not for all activities) as soon as possible, and encourage conservation authorities, municipalities, and other land authorities to reopen access for the purpose of outdoor recreation.

Under normal conditions, Ontario's 1.4 million licensed recreational anglers and almost half a million hunters contribute more than \$4 billion to the provincial economy. Fishing and hunting are incredibly important economic activities in Ontario, and will play a critical role in our province's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The OFAH looks forward to working with you to refine these recommendations, as well as find other opportunities for the outdoors community to help stimulate jobs and our economy during the challenging times ahead. We will also continue to act as a conduit to disseminate emergency information and public health recommendations to the angling and hunting communities.

Yours in Conservation,



Angelo Lombardo  
Executive Director

AL/jb

cc: Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee  
Hon. Rod Phillips, Chair, Minister of Finance  
Hon. Vic Fedeli, Vice Chair, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade  
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, President of the Treasury Board  
Hon. Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation  
Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health  
Hon. Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Minister of Indigenous Affairs  
Hon. John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Hon. Laurie Scott, Minister of Infrastructure  
Hon. Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries  
Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Government and Consumer Services  
Hon. Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development  
Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction  
OFAH Board of Directors  
Matt DeMille, OFAH Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services  
OFAH Fish and Wildlife Services Staff