

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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Ontario Conservation Centre

July 20, 2023

Office of the Mayor
City Hall, 2nd Floor
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Toronto, Ontario
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mayor_chow@toronto.ca

Dear Mayor Chow:

Subject: Opportunities for Collaboration between the OFAH and the City of Toronto

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. On behalf of the OFAH, I would like to extend my congratulations to you on your election as Mayor of the City of Toronto and draw your attention to some ongoing issues in the city, recommendations for actions, and opportunities for cooperation.

The Importance of Recreational Fishing in the City of Toronto

Recreational fishing is an outdoor activity that contributes to the cultural, social, and economic well-being of people and communities across Ontario. There are 1.26 million licensed anglers in Ontario that contribute \$2.2 billion annually to the provincial economy. The majority of Ontario's anglers reside within the 905 and 416 area codes, making the city's influence significant.

But legal, recreational fishing in Toronto is threatened by anti-fishing groups that aim to have fishing banned in places like Grenadier Pond (High Park) and other areas across the city. The Toronto angling community has been subject to harassment and persecuted in other ways for many years, and now, anti-fishing groups are attempting to leverage the city's special designations (i.e., Environmentally Significant Areas) as another tactic to prohibit fishing.

Although Toronto's Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division has gone on record in support of angling, including at Grenadier Pond, there have been situations and instances where individual staff have not shared the same opinion about fishing.

In our 2022 letter to Mayor John Tory (attached for reference), we provided a number of recommendations to ensure angling is protected and respected. However, we did not receive a response, nor did we see any meaningful implementation by the city. As such, we would like to highlight several key messages for you to consider now and into the future as mayor:

- **Develop an official position statement and policy direction for the City of Toronto that embraces, fosters, and recognizes fishing as a sustainable outdoor activity that is compatible within ESAs.**
- **Ensure law-abiding anglers can enjoy fishing opportunities in the City of Toronto free from harassment and persecution by others.**
- **Expand, enhance, and promote fishing and access opportunities throughout the city, including at Grenadier Pond and at strategic points along Lake Ontario.**

OFAH Programs

In addition to promoting the interests of Ontario's anglers and hunters, the OFAH coordinates several conservation programs that are relevant to the City of Toronto, including:

- *Bring Back the Salmon Classroom Hatcheries* – as part of an effort to restore native Atlantic Salmon to Lake Ontario, schools (including eight in Toronto), raise fish over five months to learn about natural history, biology, ecology, and the importance of being good environmental stewards.
- *Invading Species Awareness Program* – aims to increase awareness of invasive species and engage Ontarians in prevention, monitoring, and control activities through curriculum-linked outreach in classrooms, digital campaigns, in-person and virtual presentations, and reporting/early detection tools (www.invadingspecies.com).
- *OFAH Tackleshare/Urban Fishing Opportunities* – we have lending libraries of free-to-borrow fishing equipment as well as instructional videos on how and where to fish in the Greater Toronto Area, helping people get outdoors to enjoy this activity even in an urban environment.
- *Conservation Crates and virtual lessons* - our OFAH/Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre loans Conservation Crates full of hands-on, curriculum-linked, teaching materials to teachers across Ontario, providing a variety of learning tools teachers wouldn't otherwise have access to. Crates are available for students in Kindergarten through Grade 7, on topics ranging from birding to exploring. Combined with our virtual lesson series focused on Ontario's fish and wildlife, we bring an outdoor experience to any classroom.
- *National Archery in the Schools Program* – a safe, inclusive way to introduce Grade 4-12 students to target archery as part of the physical education curriculum at participating schools (www.ofah.org/nasp).

We would appreciate the opportunity to engage you or your staff in a discussion about how we can work together to advance the interests of Toronto's anglers, hunters, and conservationists.

Yours in Conservation,



Angelo Lombardo
Executive Director

AL/jb

cc: OFAH Board of Directors
OFAH Fisheries Advisory Committee
Matt DeMille, OFAH Director, Policy & Programs
Mark Ryckman, OFAH Manager, Policy
Chris Robinson, OFAH Manager, Programs