**Dear Premier Ford, Minister Lecce, and Minister McCarthy,**

Thank you for the opportunity to express our deep concern and strong opposition to Bill 5, the *Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, 2025*.

Protecting Ontario’s biodiversity isn’t a barrier to economic success—it’s the foundation of it. Healthy ecosystems ensure clean air and water, support resilient communities, sustain a strong visitor economy, and provide the basis for long-term, sustainable growth. Ontario’s environmental integrity is an economic asset, not an obstacle.

We are deeply concerned by several components of Bill 5. First, we strongly oppose the plan to amend and ultimately repeal the **Endangered Species Act** under Schedule 2. The proposed **Species Conservation Act, 2025** would empower Cabinet to override science-based decisions in species protection, replace expert review with a voluntary online registry, and drastically narrow the legal definition of habitat to exclude crucial life cycle areas. These changes would gut long-standing protections and abandon our responsibility to protect Ontario’s threatened wildlife and natural systems.

We also oppose the elimination of recovery planning and compensation requirements when environmental harm is unavoidable. These mechanisms are essential to balancing development with ecological stewardship. Stripping them away undermines both environmental and public interest.

Further, the proposed creation of **“special economic zones”** under Schedule 9 would allow “trusted proponents” to bypass municipal by-laws, provincial regulations, and Indigenous consultation obligations. The legislation provides no clear limits, criteria, or oversight—granting extraordinary power to Cabinet behind closed doors. This is incompatible with the principles of democracy, due process, and the rule of law.

Finally, proposed amendments to the **Mining Act** would reduce transparency by allowing the Minister to suspend public-facing systems that currently support public oversight of mining activities. The cumulative impact of these changes is alarming: it threatens the ecological health, social trust, and legal foundations that Ontarians rely on.

Ontario’s lakes, forests, wetlands, and wildlife are not expendable in the name of short-term development. We urge the Government of Ontario to withdraw Bill 5 in its entirety and instead commit to economic policies that respect environmental limits, uphold democratic accountability, and protect the natural legacy we all depend on.

Sincerely,
*Concerned Citizens of Ontario*