

How will the changes to the *Endangered Species Act* affect listings of species that are of interest in Ontario?

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Introduction

Biodiversity loss is a pressing global issue. In Ontario, species at risk (SARs) are protected under the *Endangered Species Act (2007)* (Olive, 2012). The Act ensures that recovery strategies are in place for species that are recognized as threatened or endangered in the province. Currently, 243 SARs are recognized under the Species At Risk in Ontario List (SARO), with 117 of them being listed as endangered and 54 as threatened (Ontario, 2019). In 2019, the provincial government amended that legislation through the *More Homes, More Choice Act (2019)*. Through these amendments, it is clear that the government has prioritized economic gains over environmental well-being. **This project aims to understand these changes and the importance of sustainable development through a case study of the Niagara Region.**



Figure 1. Map of the Niagara Region



Figure 2. Niagara River



Figure 3. Development on Niagara Parkway

Background

- Key changes to the ESA include (Ontario Nature, 2019):
 - Developers paying a fee to disturb species at risk habitat rather than fulfilling requirements for on-the-ground compensation
 - Expanding the assessment of species at risk on the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO) to include those with community knowledge
 - Determining the assessments on species at risk based on their global range

References

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Ontario. 2019. "2019 review of progress towards the protection and recovery of Ontario's species at risk." <https://www.ontario.ca/document/2019-review-progress-towards-protection-and-recovery-ontarios-species-risk>

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Methodology

- Data search for listed SARA through international, federal, and provincial lists
- Ground verification
- Interviews with key experts

Results

- Changes to the *Endangered Species Act* are detrimental to species survival
- Species matter to humans, but not enough people are doing work on species at risk
- 71 species have resided in the Niagara Region
- Of those species, 37 of them are listed as being globally stable
- Out of the 37 species, 16 of them are listed as 'threatened' on SARO List
- Some familiarity with sustainable development, but it has not been utilized in future development projects
- Questions remain about how *More Homes, More Choice Act* will be implemented

Implications and Key Takeaways

- 37 species could be down-listed from their current provincial status
- If the 16 species were to be down-listed to 'special concern', they would lose their recovery strategies
- To find a balance between economic activity, social well-being, and environmental stability, sustainable development should be given greater consideration in future development projects
- Species at risk are crucial to human survival through ecosystem services they provide, including economic gains, improved health, and food security



NatureServe Global Ranking	G5	G4	G3	G2	G1	GU
Number of SARs	37	21	10	1	1	1

G5 = Secure; G4 = Apparently Secure; G3 = Vulnerable; G2 = Imperiled; G1 = Critically Imperiled; GU = Unrankable