

Ottawa Riverkeeper Comments on the Proposed Special Economic Zones Act, 2025

Ottawa Riverkeeper, a registered Canadian charity and leading voice for the protection of the Ottawa River watershed, submits the following comments on the proposed *Special Economic Zones Act, 2025*.

We are deeply concerned that this legislation would establish zones in which environmental protections, including species-at-risk regulations, can be suspended. This would allow development to proceed without the safeguards, review processes, or accountability mechanisms that are otherwise required under Ontario law.

These Special Economic Zones (SEZs) would function as deregulated corridors for industrial expansion, particularly in ecologically sensitive or resource-rich areas, where the public, Indigenous communities, and environmental regulators could be sidelined. Removing legal protections in targeted regions undermines the principle of consistent environmental stewardship and threatens the ecological health of entire watersheds.

Ottawa Riverkeeper strongly objects to the creation of SEZs that override environmental law. This approach erodes public trust, weakens environmental governance, and sets a dangerous precedent that risks long-term ecological harm.

We urge the Government of Ontario to retract this legislation and to uphold uniform, science-based protections for species and ecosystems across the province.