



## **Ontario Government ignores staff advice and science to grant political favours to hunting and fishing groups.**

### **Minister Yakabuski insists on a 50-cormorant-a-day kill.**

**TORONTO - March 12, 2019:** Freedom of Information material acquired by Animal Alliance shows that the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), the Honourable John Yakabuski, pushed for an absurdly high bag limit of 50 cormorants per day and an open hunting season from mid March to the end of December, a total of 291 days against staff advice.

“Yakabuski is pandering to special interest groups such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters against staff advice and without any science,” said Barry MacKay, spokesperson, Cormorant Defenders International and Director of Canadian & Special Programs, Born Free.

In a letter ([www.ofah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018PC-OFAHResponse.pdf](http://www.ofah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018PC-OFAHResponse.pdf)) the Premier states, “For too long, successive Ontario governments have crafted hunting regulations based on emotion rather than on appropriate wildlife management practices. For example, they have refused to make cormorants a hunt-eligible species despite large populations and the negative environmental consequences of that bird population.”

“Premier Ford and his government are proposing one of the most regressive wildlife management decisions in Canadian history against a native bird. Apparently some MNRF staff have similar concerns,” said Rob Laidlaw, spokesperson, Cormorant Defenders International and Executive Director, Zoocheck. “This proposed hunt is particularly worrying because data collected by the US Fish and Wildlife Services between 2005 and 2016 shows that the population on the US side of the Great Lakes has decreased by 36%. Ontario has not counted the birds since 2009. Killing 50 birds per day by each hunter with an outdoor card and small game permit is clearly an extermination exercise.”

“The Freedom of Information material attained through Cabinet Office shows deep concern about the proposed cormorant hunt by some Ministry staff,” said Liz White, spokesperson, Cormorant Defenders International and Director, Animal Alliance of Canada. “Advice from the Minister's staff seems to have fallen on deaf ears. As one staff person points out, one hunter could legally kill and waste 14,500 cormorants in one season. There is no scientific reason for the proposed cormorant hunt. This initiative is driven entirely by political reasons.”

“We urge the Minister to listen to the concerns expressed by his staff and withdraw the proposed cormorant hunt,” said MacKay.

**Background:**

1. The Minister insists on a bag limit of 50 cormorants per day despite concerns raised by MNRF staff, including risk of extirpation of cormorant colonies.
2. The Minister seeks a continuous hunting season from mid March to December 31 despite concerns about public safety particularly during cottage season.
3. Staff from two of the three MNRF regions and one from a district within the third region have expressed concern with the Minister's proposed cormorant hunt.
4. The Ministry has presented no evidence to justify any lethal cormorant management.

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