



NEWS > LOGGING DEBATE

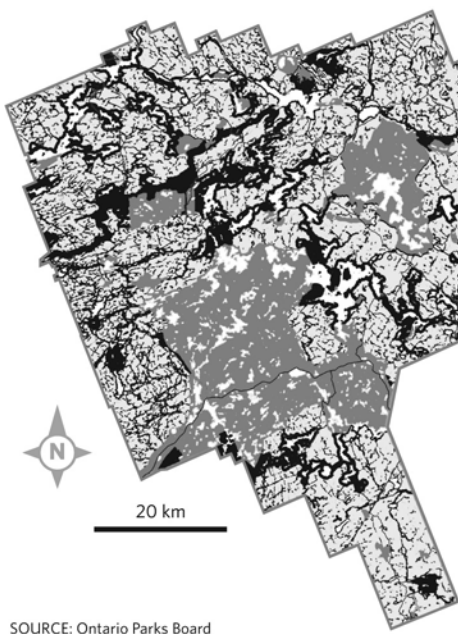
Algonquin Park land use

The province is considering a proposal to increase the amount of forest protected from logging.

■ Board recommended protection zones  
 ■ Existing protection zones  
 ■ Lumbering zones

Land use	Current	Recommended
Protected zone	22%	54%
Lumbered zone	78%	46%

Total park area: **763,310 hectares**  
 Total area protected: **168,450 hectares**  
 Total area lumbered: **594,860 hectares**



SOURCE: Ontario Parks Board

# Province pressed to cut logging

Environmentalists angry over MNR's warring on banning or curbing Algonquin Park operations

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Just three weeks into the job, Natural Resources Minister Donna Cansfield has angered environmentalists over whether to curb, or even ban, logging in Algonquin Provincial Park.

She'll probably come under more pressure next week, when provincial environmental commissioner Gord Miller releases his annual report.

Although it's not usually evident to the million or so people who camp, canoe or hike each year in Ontario's oldest park, trees can be cut down and hauled out of more than three-quarters of the popular "wilderness" preserve.

While logging areas and seasons are separated as much as possible from tourist routes, "it's not a park

with logging in it; it's an industrial zone that permits canoeing," says Evan Ferrari, of CPAWS Wildlands League, an advocacy group — and chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society — originally formed to preserve the park.

Current practices threaten birds, animals and old-growth trees in the 763,000-hectare park, four hours' drive north of Toronto, he said in an interview yesterday.

The league and other groups want Cansfield to change a policy that's been a cornerstone of the park since it was created in 1892.

The province, they say, should at least adopt a recent recommendation from the Ontario Parks Board, a government agency, that the area protected from logging be increased from 22 per cent to 54 per cent. The move would allow logging

to continue at its current rate, but in a smaller area, the board said in a report made public last May.

The Algonquin Forestry Authority, the crown corporation that allocates cutting areas in the park to forestry companies, said it supports a protected area only slightly smaller than what the board proposed.

Others, including Miller, argue it's time to consider a complete ban on logging in Algonquin, a step that would bring it in line with every other provincial park. "The question of principle is central," Miller said in an interview yesterday. "It's where the public debate and discussion should be."

Miller is to deal with that question in next week's report.

Given his comments yesterday, he's likely to be critical of former natural resources minister Dave Ramsay for rejecting a formal request by the Wildlands League for a full review of logging in Algonquin.

The parks board was asked to look

at how current logging activity and jobs could be kept while reducing the industry's impact. It "was not asked 'Is this in the best interest of the ecological integrity of the park?'" Miller said.

Provincial law states parks management must focus on ecological integrity.

But Cansfield isn't considering a ban and is hedging on even the proposed modest increase in the protected area. That's because any change would bring her under fire from local logging companies and communities that depend on access to the park's trees. They say the board's recommendations would cripple the industry and businesses outside the park that rely on it.

"We are very concerned with the future of our logging industries and the well-being of our local producers because of this ecological footprint that has come down," South Algonquin Mayor Percy Bresnahan said at a noisy meeting after the

board's report was released.

The million annual visitors "have an awfully lot larger impact than logging does," said Jeff Muzzi, Renfrew County's forest services manager. Much of the logging area isn't cut because of its lakes or treeless swamps and rock outcrops, he said.

The board consulted with many involved in the issue, and about 9,000 people submitted responses to its report — more than 8,000 in support of a smaller logging area.

Even so, Cansfield says more consultation is needed, and she's asked the board and forestry authority to do it over the next three or four months. "I want to ensure no stone is left unturned in the consultations," she said. "We'll see what comes out of it."

"The extensive consultation has been done," Ferrari responded. "The technical evaluations are completed. All point to more protection. The only thing missing is a decision."

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