



PEACEFUL  
PARKS  
COALITION

**For Immediate Release - October 14, 2004**

***Ontario's Deer - More Than Just Crops  
Province's Deer Management Program Challenged***

Ontario's deer population is managed as a harvestable natural resource, very much in the same way that livestock or valuable crops are managed in the farming community. But deer are more than harvestable surpluses, they are wild, and it is high time that this program be reviewed under the Environmental Assessment Act.

The McGuinty government has recently announced a major deer reduction program across the province by expanding hunting opportunities by both farmers and sport hunters. Over 100,000 deer will be shot, primarily within a two week period this fall. McGuinty cites an increase in car collisions and crop damage as proof the deer population is "out-of-control."

But the Peaceful Parks Coalition, using data from a major car insurance company, found a correlation between the hunting season and an increase in car collisions. "It is difficult to do this sort of research because there is no place in Ontario where deer is not hunted, but using three sample areas where the hunting season was scattered over a five week period, we found that car collisions with deer increased on hunting days," says AnnaMaria Valastro.

"You can expand the hunting season all you like, but it won't permanently bring down the deer population," says Gus Zylstra. "This is because culling doesn't work. It only perpetuates the problem. Wildlife is always striving to reach their natural carrying capacity within their environment. Once you create a vacuum through culling, deer will accelerate their birthrate. You can see this quite clearly with the culling programs at Rondeau and Pinery Provincial Parks," says Gus Zylstra.

"McGuinty hasn't quite figured it out yet," says Valastro. "Wildlife management by the gun isn't popular anymore. Not only does the public not approve, interest in sport hunting is declining. If he doesn't learn to manage our wildlife ecologically, there isn't going to be anyone around to do the killing for him."

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*Full submission to the Ministry of the Environment is available at  
<http://www.peacefulparks.org>*

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