
An Update: The Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*

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The Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act received Second Reading on May 8, 2006. It was referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for clause by clause review. The Standing Committee held a hearing with respect to the act. Based on presentations and advice received, the Standing Committee subsequently approved a number of amendments.

On June 19, 2006 the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, and amendments recommended by the Standing Committee, passed Third Reading in the Legislative Assembly. Royal Assent was provided by the Lieutenant Governor on June 20, 2006. Royal Proclamation, which will bring the new act into effect, is pending. Key amendments approved by the Legislative Assembly upon Third Reading include the following:

- Section 4 was added to recognize existing aboriginal and treaty rights;
- Subsection 8(2), the objective for wilderness class provincial parks, was amended to provide that “visitors travel by non-mechanized means” except as may be provided by the regulations. An associated amendment allows the Minister to make regulations allowing mechanized travel in certain circumstances, which are listed in Subsection 54(3);
- Section 9 was amended to provide that any withdrawal of land from a provincial park or conservation reserve exceeding 1% of its total area, or 100 hectares, whichever is less, would have to be endorsed by the Legislative Assembly;
- Section 50 was amended to provide that fines would be higher for a second or subsequent contravention of the act, as a means to encourage compliance with the act.

Additional amendments fine tuned some provisions of the act, clarified intentions and corrected errors.

It is expected that proposed regulations under the new act will be released for public consultation in the spring of 2007. Once consultation is concluded, and regulations receive approval, it will be possible for the government to proclaim the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act.

The Act can be found at:

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/LaDBws/Statutes/English/06p12_e.htm

* As an update on the new Act, this report was prepared by Robert Moos on March 22, 2007.

