



### Conservation Organizations Call for Swift Approval of Bill C-248 Feb. 6, 2024

OTTAWA, Ont. — Conservation organizations are eager to see positive movement on Bill C-248 as the Senate resumes sitting this week following the winter break.

Windsor West MP Brian Masse's private members' bill to create an Ojibway National Urban Park has been at second reading in the Senate since June 6, 2023, and is awaiting a vote to send it to the Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources Standing Committee for study.

"With the private members' bill still moving through the legislative process, planning for the national urban park has had to wait for the final passing of the Ojibway National Urban Park legislation," said Mike Fisher, Chair of the National Urban Park Committee for The Friends of Ojibway Prairie.

"We are quite eager to move forward with the creation of Canada's second national urban park right here in Windsor-Essex."

Under Bill C-248, an Ojibway National Urban Park would be created under the Canada National Parks' Act with the full protection provided under federal law and the highest level of commitment from Parks Canada that is afforded to other legislated national parks across Canada. The bill was passed in the House of Commons by a vote of 319 to 1 on April 26, 2023, and moved to the Senate for further consideration.

"We've been thrilled to see such strong support from all three levels of government for Bill C-248 and the creation of an Ojibway National Urban Park," said Bill Roesel, President of The Friends of Ojibway Prairie.

"We have seen unanimous support from the City of Windsor council, from all parties in the House of Commons and a strong commitment from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for their collaboration. We just need to keep things moving forward to get the legislation across the finish line."

Once the private members' bill passes a second reading vote, it will go to the committee for study where conservation organizations will look to provide input to Senate committee members reviewing the bill.

From there, it is expected to go to a third and final reading vote before royal assent to see the bill become law that will create an Ojibway National Urban Park.

"We are hoping to see royal assent of C-248 before this Parliament ends. In order to establish and then enhance the park, legislation will be a key component," said Derek Coronado, Coordinator of the Citizens Environment Alliance.

The Ojibway Prairie Complex features the greatest density of rare species of any location in Ontario. Long-time advocates achieved a major victory this past year with the successful transfer of Ojibway Shores to Parks Canada as the first piece of federally owned land to be included in the proposed national urban park.

"The Unifor Windsor Regional Environment Council has been advocating for Ojibway as a National Urban Park for more than a decade. This land needs to be protected and this legislation will help achieve that goal. This process has already taken far too long and we need the Senate to move quickly to finally pass this legislation", said Richard St. Denis, President, Unifor Windsor Regional Environment Council.

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#### **About the Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario**

The Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario (CEA) is a non-profit, grass-roots, international research and education organization based in Windsor. The CEA works to protect, enhance and restore the quality of the local and regional environment in the Great Lakes basin.

For more information: [www.citizensenvironmentalliance.org](http://www.citizensenvironmentalliance.org); [derek@citizensenvironmentalliance.org](mailto:derek@citizensenvironmentalliance.org)

#### **About the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club**

Essex County Field Naturalists' Club is a non-profit, open-to-the-public volunteer organization that focuses on promoting the conservation and restoration of the diverse natural heritage of Essex County and the surrounding region. We also strive to provide educational opportunities for the people of Essex County to become acquainted with and better understand the natural environment.

For more information: <https://www.essexcountynature.com>

#### **About The Friends of Ojibway Prairie**

The Friends of Ojibway Prairie is a registered charity and volunteer organization dedicated to promoting public awareness of the Ojibway Prairie Complex and its unique biological, cultural and historical importance. The Friends work closely with the City of Windsor and Ontario Parks to provide assistance with educational programs, special events and restoration projects.

For more information: [www.friendsofojibwayprairie.com](http://www.friendsofojibwayprairie.com); [friendsofojibway@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofojibway@gmail.com)

#### **About the Unifor Windsor Regional Environment Council**

Representing 165,000 active and retired members in this region. Labour working toward environmental sustainability through activism.

For more information: [WREC.Unifor@gmail.com](mailto:WREC.Unifor@gmail.com)