The 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is one of the world’s first global conservation treaties and the only global instrument in force dealing with water resources.

The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 144 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1401 wetland sites, totalling 122.8 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Between 1900 and 1995, human water withdrawals increased by a factor of more than six, which is more than twice the rate of population growth. In 1995, some 41% of the world’s population, or 2.3 billion people, inhabited river basins under water stress.

82 of 114 watersheds studied worldwide have less than 5% of their land area under national protection. 1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water. 2.3 billion people currently live around rivers where there are frequent water shortage and 1.7 billion of these people live in areas where water is scarce.

3 million die each year, many of them children, from illnesses caused by contaminated water.

In 20th century we destroyed 50% of the world’s remaining wetlands.

Wetlands in Parliament


Wetlands are also specifically recognized in the natural heritage protection measures of Ontario’s Planning Act.

At the federal level, the Canada Wildlife Act, Fisheries Act, Migratory Birds Convention Act, and Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, provide some protection to wetlands through species and habitat conservation measures.

However, other legislations, such as the provincial Drainage Act, still work against wetland conservation by permitting wetland drainage for agricultural purposes. In most cases, the installation of municipal drains significantly alters the local water cycle, resulting in dramatic changes to wetland area and function.

Wetlands in Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wetlands of Ontario</th>
<th>Name of Wetland</th>
<th>Area (ha.)</th>
<th>Date Since Was created</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Point</td>
<td>3,730</td>
<td>24/05/82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Claire</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>06/10/85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern James Bay</td>
<td>25290</td>
<td>27/05/87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polar Bear Provincial park</td>
<td>2408</td>
<td>27/05/87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point Pelee</td>
<td>1564</td>
<td>27/05/87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mer Bleue Conservation Area</td>
<td>3343</td>
<td>26/09/95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matchedash Bay Provincial Wildlife Area</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>31/10/96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minesing Swamp</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>31/10/96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'In the face of poverty.... wetlands are lifelines'
Canada and Ontario in the World of Wetlands

Dr. Paresh Pandya
Hindu Mandir Windsor
And
Faculty of Education
University of Windsor

'In the face of poverty....

wetlands are lifelines'

Canada is a huge, beautiful and
diverse country, Canada is second
largest country in the world, with an
Area 9,984,070 Km²

Canada holds over 25% of the
world’s Wetlands. Like rainforests
and coral reefs wetlands are some of
the richest plant and wildlife habitats
in the world!

Wetlands are up there with tropical
rainforests for their productivity.
They are found all over the world—
the only continent that does not have
wetlands is Antarctica. Canada is
fortunate to be home to more than
1,270,000 square kilometres (127
million hectares) of wetlands. That’s
nearly 25 per cent of all the wetlands
on Earth!

Canada holds over 20% of the
world’s fresh water. Its longest river,
the Mackenzie, stretches 4241 Km.
The convention on wetlands came
into force for Canada on 15 May
1981. Canada presently has 36 sites
designated as wetlands of
international importance, with a
surface area of 13,051,501 hectares

Ontario presently has 8 sites out of
36 sites designated as wetlands of
international Importance with surface
area of 54,419 hectares. (0.42% of
total area of Canada).

Unfortunately, wetland loss
continues in Canada. As much as 70
per cent of Canada’s original
wetlands have been lost in some
areas of the country. That’s why we
have to work to conserve, restore and
manage Canada’s wetlands for
waterfowl, other wildlife and people.

... Did you know...?

Canada is home to nearly 25 per cent of all the
wetlands on Earth. In fact, about 14 per cent of
Canada’s total area is covered in wetlands.
While that may seem like a lot, the fact is that
wetlands continue to disappear every day.

Wetlands naturally filter water resources,
improving the quality of the water Canadians
drink and use every day.

Wetlands act like giant sponges, slowing the
flow of surface water, reducing the impact of
flooding and recharging groundwater supplies.

Wetlands and vegetation form buffers that
separate land-use activities (such as agriculture)
from water bodies.

Wetlands have the potential to remove and
store greenhouse gases from the Earth’s
atmosphere.

Wetlands help to prevent soil erosion.

Wetlands are a key link in the water system
chain. Canadians have made it clear that water
is one of our most important environmental
issues. Wetland and water conservation is
critical if we want to keep our water healthy.
The next time you take a drink of water, think
about how Canada’s wetlands help to keep our
water clean.

Wetlands are a vital part of our environment.
Unfortunately, when people think of wetlands,
many think of them as wastelands. This
couldn’t be further from the truth.