

Fighting Invasive Species in Ontario:

Ontario is taking strong action to address the social, ecological and economic threats that invasive species pose to our natural environment.

The Invasive Species Act, that was introduced February 26th, 2014, would support the prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province.

If passed, the legislation would position Ontario as the first and only jurisdiction in Canada to introduce standalone invasive species legislation.

This legislation would:

- Give Ontario the tools to ban activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species,
- Allow the government to intervene earlier and enable rapid response actions, including working with partners to stop an invasive species from spreading – for example by preventing the movement of contaminated firewood,
- Help ensure compliance through modernized inspection and enforcement measures.

Protecting the environment is part of the government's plan to enhance the quality of life for Ontario families and ensure a dynamic economy for future generations. It is also part of the government's economic plan that is creating jobs for today and tomorrow by focusing on Ontario's greatest strengths – its people and strategic partnerships.

FAQ:

What are invasive species?

Invasive species come from other countries or regions (not native to Ontario) and are considered alien species when they move outside their native habitat.

Invasive species impact, or have the potential to impact, Ontario's biodiversity (natural environment). To be considered as invasive, species must be able to survive, reproduce and spread in the wild in Ontario.

Once these alien invaders are established, they are extremely difficult and costly to control and eradicate – and their ecological effects are often irreversible.

How do invasive species spread?

Invasive species can enter Ontario and spread across the province in different ways.

Sometimes they are spread unintentionally – for example, recreational boaters who unknowingly transfer zebra mussels that are attached to their boat, from one body of water to another. But many times people introduce invasive species into Ontario knowingly – whether it's purchasing invasive plants for gardening, dumping aquarium plants or pets into local waterways, or moving contaminated firewood.

Once invasive species are introduced into the wild, they spread because they have no natural predators, reproduce rapidly, and have few competitors for food and water in their new environments. Most invasive species are generalists, meaning they can use a wide variety of food sources and habitats, and can survive in a variety of climates. This makes it easy for them to spread into new ecosystems.

Some of the ways invasive species enter and spread across Ontario include:

- All-terrain Vehicles (ATVs)
- Ballast water
- Canals and changes to waterways
- Gardening and landscaping
- Movement of live fish and bait
- Movement or transport of topsoil
- Recreational and commercial boating
- Transport of animal carcasses or products made from them
- Transport of raw wood and other forest products
- Water transport and using water for dust control on roads

How do invasive species threaten Ontario's biodiversity (natural environment)?

Invasive species move into ecosystems and take over, killing some native species. Invasive species disrupt food webs, degrade habitat, introduce parasites and disease, and lead to species becoming at risk. Globally, only habitat loss is a bigger threat to biodiversity.

How do invasive species threaten Ontario's economy?

Globally, invasive species costs are estimated to be \$1.4 trillion —the equivalent of five per cent of the global economy and seven times the cost of natural disasters. Industries like fishing, hunting, forestry, tourism and agriculture can all be negatively affected by invasive species. In the Great Lakes Basin, invasive species foul water intakes, reduce the value of commercial and recreational fisheries, and reduce property values. Every year, [invasive plants](#) cost the agriculture and forest industries in Canada about \$7.3 billion. In Ontario, the negative impact of invasive zebra mussels is estimated to cost \$75 to \$91 million per year – and that's just one species. Fighting the spread of invasive species is also extremely expensive – that's why prevention is so critical.

How do invasive species threaten society?

Invasive species can be dangerous. For example, [giant hogweed](#), a plant introduced from Asia, is toxic. The plant's sap can cause painful burning blisters on the skin.

Many Ontarians enjoy outdoor activities like swimming, boating and hiking. When invasive species move into our parks and beaches they can affect these activities. For example, water chestnut, an aquatic invasive plant, floats on the surface of the water and forms dense clusters with sharp barbs. It threatens native species and makes swimming and boating difficult.

What You Can Do: Taking Action Against Invasive Species

I've seen an invasive species – what should I do now?

If you find an invasive species on your property, or in your community, you should report it.

Your information will help us prevent and track the spread of invasive species in Ontario. You can report invasive species sightings to the **Invading Species Hotline at: 1 800 563 7711** or by email at: info@invadingspecies.com

You can also report online at: <http://www.eddmaps.org/ontario/>

What can I do to help prevent the spread of invasive species?

Preventing invasive species from arriving and becoming established in Ontario is critical in our fight against this growing threat.

There are many things you can do to help play a part, including:

- **Gardening?** Make sure to plant native, or non-invasive, species.
- **Going camping?** Don't transport firewood. Buy it locally; leave what you don't use there.
- **Going fishing?** Don't empty your bait bucket in or near water – it's against the law.
- **Going boating?** Wash your boat before you move to another lake or river.
- **Going hiking?** Clean visible mud, plants and seeds from your boots and other equipment.
- **Travelling?** Don't take plants, plant parts, seeds or fruit across borders.
- **Have a pet fish that's no longer wanted?** Don't release it into the wild and don't flush dead fish down the toilet. Put them in the garbage or compost.

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