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COALITION

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - November 16, 2006

### *Government and Police Action Illegal During Cormorant Cull*

Toronto, November 16 2006: Activists opposed to the culling of double-crested cormorants at Presqu'ile Provincial Park near Belleville, Ontario have asked that Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Provincial Police Professional Standards Bureau to authorize an investigation into the likely illegal activities of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Brighton OPP Detachment. Activists charge that:

- that ministry officials, in collusion with Ontario Provincial Police and the Canadian Coast Guard, knowingly and deliberately violated the Charter Rights of citizens who attempted to document and videotape the cull of cormorants in Presqu'ile Provincial Park in May 2006;
- that ministry officials acted improperly - likely illegally - by either not filing an Environmental Assessment or not adhering to the regulations of the Animals for Research Act in regards to the cull, and;
- that ministry officials, in their conduct of the cull at Presqu'ile, committed offences under "Cruelty to Animals" Section 446 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

The Shipping Act guarantees public access to public waters, but yet the Ontario Provincial Police enforced a 2.2 km exclusion zone they knew was illegal around the culling site. This endangered the lives of activists by forcing them out into deeper and rougher waters or back to shore.

"Doing the government's dirty work is not the role of law enforcement agents," says AnnaMaria Valastro "We have a right to be there and a right to observe and film the sheer panic and devastation inflicted on the birds. If Dalton McGuinty believes his culling program is so wonderful then he shouldn't object to us filming it", say Valastro.

For more information please contact AnnaMaria Valastro 416 785 8636

#### **Note to the Editor:**

The double-crested cormorant is a black fish-eating migratory bird native to Ontario. It has long been the target of anglers who accused the bird of eating too many sport fish. In 2003, the McGuinty government began shooting comorants by the thousands during their nesting period at Presqu'ile Provincial Park on Lake Ontario. They have killed over ten thousand birds at Presqu'ile alone and oiled tens of thousands of cormorant eggs in the North Channel and Georgian Bay region of the Great Lakes. Oiling suffocates the embryo.

There is no scientific or ecological rational to justify the mass slaughter. The birds are being systematically eliminated from the Great Lakes basin by a joint concerted effort by state and provincial fish and wildlife government agencies simply to appease an irate sport fishing lobby.

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press release