



Ontario Expands Free Day Use at Provincial Parks for Veterans and Active Canadian Armed Forces Members

BOWMANVILLE — The Ontario government has expanded free day-use access to provincial parks for Veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces, who reside in Ontario. Starting today, Veterans and active service members can visit any of the province's Ontario Parks for free seven days a week, including long weekends and statutory holidays, removing an additional barrier for those unable to visit Ontario's world-class parks and natural spaces during the workweek.

"We are immensely grateful for the courage and sacrifices made by the brave men and women who dedicate their lives to defending our country and protecting our values of freedom and democracy," said Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. "Expanding access to our incredible provincial parks is a token of appreciation for their service and commitment. Through this program, I hope all past and active service members can enjoy everything that Ontario Parks has to offer."

Veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces can access free day-use entry to more than 340 Ontario Parks across the province by reserving in advance through the Ontario Parks Reservation Service or by presenting valid Canadian Armed Forces identification — such as a Veteran's Service Card, Canadian Forces Identification Card, Record of Service Card or Temporary National Defence Identification Card — and proof of Ontario residency with photo identification upon arrival. Free entry also extends to friends and

loved ones accompanying a service member or veteran in the same vehicle.

Since launching free weekday access for veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces in 2019, Ontario Parks has welcomed more than 228,000 weekday visits from Veterans, active members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and their families and friends. Spending time in nature supports both physical and mental health, reduces stress and improves overall well-being. Expanding access to every day of the week ensures more Veterans and active service members can experience these benefits, while supporting Ontario's work to create more outdoor recreation opportunities across the province.

As part of its plan to protect Ontario, the province continues to create new outdoor recreation opportunities, strengthening local tourism and ensuring families can continue to enjoy Ontario's natural heritage for generations to come.

Free day-use entry for Veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces members covers all occupants arriving in the same vehicle.

There is no limit on how often eligible Veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces members visit a park using free day-use entry. However, advance reservations are recommended during busy periods.

Ontario is home to nearly 150,000 Veterans and approximately 9,000 Canadian Armed Forces members are released from military service each year.

Nominations for the 2026 Ontario Veterans Award for

Community Service Excellence (OVACSE) are now open until September 4, 2026.

Ontario's provincial parks system includes over 340 parks and over 300 conservation reserves, protecting approximately 9.8 million hectares across the province — larger than the total landmass of New Brunswick.

"The contributions and sacrifices made by Ontario's Veterans and active members of the Canadian Armed Forces have helped shape and strengthen our province and country. By expanding free day-use access to provincial parks, our government is recognizing their service and ensuring more Veterans can enjoy Ontario's natural spaces with their families and loved ones."

- Graham McGregor
Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism

"On behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Command, I express my sincerest gratitude to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for expanding the free day use at provincial parks for Veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces members. This expansion will ensure that all veterans and currently serving members and their families will have the opportunity to take advantage of what our Ontario Parks have to offer, not only on weekdays, but on weekends, too. We are very grateful for this change, and I thank you on behalf of the many Veterans in Ontario."

- Lynn McClellan
President of The Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Command

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