



Conservation ONTARIO
Natural Champions

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES STRONGLY SUPPORT CALL TO PROTECT ONTARIO'S IMPORTANT BIODIVERSITY

NEWMARKET (January 10, 2012) Conservation Authorities strongly support Ontario's Environmental Commissioner's latest report calling for an integrated provincial approach to protect Ontario's important biodiversity. Recognizing climate change, invasive species, overexploitation, and pollution as the most significant threats to the province's native species and ecological systems, Gord Miller called for a more coordinated approach among Ontario's ministries to be led by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

"As the 'frontline' delivery agents for many natural resource programs that protect and restore Ontario's biodiversity on a watershed basis, we understand and see, first hand, the important role biodiversity plays in protecting public health and promoting a sustainable environment and economy," said Don Pearson, General Manager of Conservation Ontario, the umbrella organization that represents Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities.

Working with all levels of government, other agencies and landowners - and often with the help of provincial funding and direction - Conservation Authorities plan and deliver a wide variety of natural resource programs such as stewardship, tree planting, habitat restoration, flood and erosion control, and source water protection that protect Ontario's species, habitats and ecosystems.

Conservation Authorities help provincial ministries to achieve their environmental objectives by working together. "We regularly collaborate with the Ministries of Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs because we are closely connected with local communities and ecosystems," Pearson said. "But, as Mr. Miller points out, that work has to continue to be supported because it's not easy managing the significant and growing impact of Ontario's population."

Conservation Authority programs improve water quality, promote water conservation, and protect important local natural areas and habitats, and generally ensure the resilience and sustainability of these resources into the future.

Specifically, Conservation Authorities:

- work in partnership with the Ministry of Environment to deliver the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Program and the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program,
- deliver important stewardship and water quality improvement programs that contribute to the implementation of the bi-national Great Lakes Biodiversity Conservation Plans, and
- facilitate watershed planning with municipalities, residents and other agencies.

Native species and ecosystems connect important land and water resources and contribute significantly to the health of people, economy and environment. Healthy biodiversity is key in adapting to climate change and ensures clean drinking water, fresh air and economic benefits.

Nature provides us with many important things that are important to our economy and to our health:

- trees help to clean the air we breathe, improve water quality and regulate our climate;
- wetlands filter drinking water sources, and protect us against flooding and drought, preventing millions of dollars in damages;
- wild plants provide food for us, prevent erosion and help to maintain healthy soil for agricultural crops;
- bees and other insects pollinate crops and wild plants;
- the Great Lakes provide billions of dollars in revenue from activities such as commercial and sport fishing, tourism, recreational boating, beaches, and as a source of drinking water for millions of Ontarians;
- lakes, rivers and natural areas provide popular outdoor recreation and businesses such as snowmobiling, hiking, canoeing, camping, and skiing.

Conservation Ontario continues to participate in the Ontario Biodiversity Council responsible for Ontario's current Biodiversity Strategy.

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For more information

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