



March 23, 2009

Barbara McKean
Head of Education
Royal Botanical Gardens
680 Plains Road West
Burlington, ON
L7T 4H4

RE: Conservation Ontario endorsement of the “Back to Nature: A Province of Ontario Network” position statement.

Dear Ms. McKean,

Conservation Ontario represents the common interests of Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities. In addition to their mandate to ensure the conservation, restoration and responsible management of Ontario’s water, land and natural habitats through programs that balance human, environmental and economic needs, Conservation Authorities provide opportunities for the public to enjoy, learn from and respect Ontario’s natural environment through the lands they manage and own, as well as the educational programs they deliver.

On March 2, 2009, Conservation Ontario Council, at the recommendation of Dolf DeJong (Conservation Halton), endorsed the following “Back to Nature: A Province of Ontario Network” position statement:

Back to Nature: A Province of Ontario Network

A connection to the natural world is fundamental to all aspects of child development and is a key component to building optimal mental, emotional, social and physical health for every child. This critical link also represents a key building block for the future of a sustainable society.

Research shows that when we foster a child’s connection with nature, the child flourishes: child obesity decreases, bullying rates decrease, child injury rates decrease, while academic achievement rises, physical activity rates increase,

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attention spans improve, physical and cultural barriers melt away and environmental stewards of the future emerge.

More work needs to be done by our governments, our educational institutions, our communities, our families and individuals to develop and support the natural spaces and initiatives necessary for our children to thrive and the research to guide us as we make these important changes.

Connecting our children to nature needs to be a provincial and national priority.

The undersigned are united in their concern about the present and future implications of this issue on the health of our children, our society and our environment.

Conservation Ontario Council also resolved to encourage its member Conservation Authorities to submit letters of support for this position statement.

Conservation Authorities, with their supporting network of conservation areas, are uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in the health of children and all watershed residents. Existing recreational opportunities, trail systems and educational programs are below capacity and offer ideal ways for children to engage with nature. Through participation in “*Back to Nature: A Province of Ontario Network*”, Conservation Authorities will be able to raise public awareness about their conservation areas and outdoor education programs, thereby increasing usage and strengthening their role in local communities.

If you have any questions regarding the above comments please contact myself at (905) 895-0716 ext. 231.

Sincerely,



Don Pearson
General Manager

c.c. All Conservation Authority General Managers/CAOs

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