



MEDIA RELEASE



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## **Creative partnership struck to give boost to Greencover Canada**

A promising partnership has been struck to improve the availability of on-farm technical and financial assistance for some environmental beneficial management practices (BMPs). The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) selected Conservation Ontario (CO), which represents 36 watershed-based Conservation Authorities (CAs) across the province, to help deliver the Greencover Canada program to producers.

OSCIA has been chosen by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to deliver the Ontario portion of the Greencover Canada (GC) program which offers technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers wishing to adopt BMPs aimed at improving soil productivity, protecting water quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and enhancing biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

Eligible projects include: buffer strips and livestock fencing projects alongside watercourses, structural erosion control work next to creeks, and tree shelterbelt plantings. The program offers up to 50 percent cost-share to a maximum of \$20,000 per registered farm business to establish eligible BMPs.

Through the special arrangement, Conservation Authorities will provide on-farm technical assistance when requested by the producer, for work involving eligible GC practices. In return, CAs will receive modest compensation for each completed project, directly from OSCIA, to help cover a portion of the incremental costs associated with the service provided. The funding to support the OSCIA-CO arrangement comes through the \$15 million agreement that OSCIA has with AAFC.

OSCIA President, Kevin Ferguson, says the arrangement with CO will result in more BMPs being implemented on the ground where they are needed. "Environmental work along watercourses has been a tough sell to many Ontario producers as compared to in-field practices that offer the farmer a promise of return on investment. Having skilled specialists from the watershed authorities available to offer ideas and advice on-site, at no direct charge to the farmer, will result in more producers taking advantage of what GC offers."

Peter Krause, Chair of Conservation Ontario, is excited with the prospect of 36 Conservation Authorities being involved in province-wide delivery of this program to the agricultural community. "We have a solid team of professional and technical staff that are eager to complement the delivery expertise that OSCIA is known for. Offering environmental assistance to farmers has been an important activity for many Authorities over the years."

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## **Backgrounder**

The Greencover Canada program is a five-year, \$110-million Government of Canada initiative to help landowners improve grassland-management practices, protect water quality, reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

A national program, Greencover Canada focuses on four components:

- land conversion - converting environmentally sensitive land to perennial cover;
- critical areas - managing agricultural land near water;
- technical assistance - helping producers adopt beneficial management practices; Watershed Evaluation of BMPs (WEBs); and
- shelterbelts - planting trees on agricultural land.