



Conservation ONTARIO
Natural Champions

Media Release

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CONSERVATION ONTARIO SUPPORTS ECO CALL FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

NEWMARKET (April 24, 2007) Conservation Ontario fully supports the findings of Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, in the Special Report he released today. Miller identified a significant problem of long term, inadequate funding for the Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment, both of which are key partners for Conservation Authority efforts in Ontario.

"Gord Miller is quite right in his assessment," said Dick Hibma Chair of Conservation Ontario, the agency that represents the province's 36 Conservation Authorities. "Funding for the environmental protection mandated to these two ministries has taken a back seat to health and education for far too long. No doubt, health and education are important, but it's all connected and the focus has been skewed for some time now."

Conservation Authorities and the Province share a common goal for managing natural resources and protecting the environment. For this arrangement to work efficiently and effectively, it must be adequately supported by the Province.

"We collaborate on many programs with both MNR and MOE and know the budgetary constraints under which they have been operating. Most importantly, this underfunding has had a significant impact on the programs that Conservation Authorities deliver on behalf of or in conjunction with the Province," said Conservation Ontario's General Manager, Don Pearson.

The absence of appropriate and necessary funding for these Ministries affects the development of the science and policy essential if Ontario is to make progress on the protection of natural heritage, climate change, biodiversity, water and air quality.

Investment is required by all governments for current services and initiatives to be maintained as well as to develop the new programs required to meet today's increasing demands.

"An increase in funding to important environmental programs will strengthen Ontario's ability to provide leading edge watershed management in Ontario, thus protecting public health," said Pearson. "The Commissioner was careful to say that all three parties have led

governments that are responsible for the current state of affairs. That said, all three parties have a responsibility to come together to correct the problem.”

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Conservation Authorities are local watershed managers who work closely with all levels of government including municipalities, the federal government and the Province, especially the ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources.

For more information, please contact:

Don Pearson, General Manager, Conservation Ontario

Cell: 905-251-3268 Office: 905-895-0716 ext 231

dpearson@conservation-ontario.on.ca

Jane Lewington, Marketing & Communications Specialist

Office: 895-0716 ext 222

For More Information, www.conservation-ontario.on.ca

Conservation Ontario

P.O. Box 11, 120 Bayview Parkway, Newmarket ON L3Y 4W3

(905) 895-0716