MA-C2-1

TORONTO AND REGION Conservation for The Living City

LEGISLATIVE SERVICES		
COPY TO:		FOR:
Chair	✓	✓ Committee
CAO	✓	✓
Corporate Services	✓	✓ Council
Public Works		Feb 24 2011
Employee and Business Services		
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Human Services		
Peel Living		

December 15, 2010

Sent via email

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At Authority Meeting #9/10, of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), held on November 26, 2010 Resolution #A199/10, in regard to Environmental Commissioner of Ontario 2009/2010 Annual Report was approved as follows:

WHEREAS the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) has called for a significant redefinition of Conservation to make do with less and to use what we have more wisely in order to halt long-term degradation of the environment for future generations, address significant consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss;

AND WHEREAS key recommendations have been made in the Annual Report regarding Conserving Biodiversity, Integrated Watershed Management Planning and Stormwater Management;

AND WHEREAS the ECO has acknowledged and called for a continued leadership role of conservation authorities in redefining Conservation through his Annual Report recommendations;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) endorse recommendations 2, 8 and 15 of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his 2009/2010 Annual Report titled "Redefining Conservation";

AND FURTHER THAT TRCA's member municipalities, Conservation Ontario, the provincial ministries of Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Infrastructure, Environment, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the ECO be so advised by the CAO's Office.

Enclosed for your information and any action deemed necessary is the report as presented to the Authority. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the undersigned at 416-661-6600 extension 5264 (kstranks@trca.on.ca) or Chris Jones at extension 5718 (cjones@trca.on.ca).

Sincerely

Kathy Stranks

Kathy Stranks
Manager, Chair and CAO's Office

cc. Chris Jones, Acting Senior Planner, TRCA

/Encl.

REFERRAL TO _____
RECOMMENDED
DIRECTION REQUIRED _____
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED ✓

MA-C2-2

Item AUTH7.3

TO: Chair and Members of the Authority Meeting #9/10, November 26, 2010

FROM: Carolyn Woodland, Director, Planning and Development

RE: **ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO 2009/2010 ANNUAL REPORT**

KEY ISSUE

Acknowledging key recommendations related to conservation authorities made by the Environmental Commissioner in his 2009/2010 Annual Report.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) has called for a significant redefinition of Conservation to make do with less and to use what we have more wisely in order to halt long-term degradation of the environment for future generations, address significant consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss;

AND WHEREAS key recommendations have been made in the Annual Report regarding Conserving Biodiversity, Integrated Watershed Management Planning and Stormwater Management;

AND WHEREAS the ECO has acknowledged and called for a continued leadership role of conservation authorities in redefining Conservation through his Annual Report recommendations;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) endorse recommendations 2, 8 and 15 of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his 2009/2010 Annual Report titled "Redefining Conservation";

AND FURTHER THAT TRCA's member municipalities, Conservation Ontario, the provincial ministries of Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Infrastructure, Environment, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the ECO be so advised by the CAO's Office.

BACKGROUND

On September 22, 2010, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO), Mr. Gord Miller, released his 2009/2010 Annual Report titled "Redefining Conservation." The ECO is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario created through the Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993. Recently, through the *Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009*, the ECO's mandate has been expanded to report publicly on Ontario's progress toward meeting our greenhouse gas emission reduction and energy conservation targets. As such, he has a unique role reporting directly to the people of Ontario, through their Provincial Parliament on progress related to climate change and energy conservation. The ECO's reports also seek to make ministries accountable for their environmental decisions, to ensure that ministry decisions are made in accordance with the goal all Ontarians hold in common: to protect, conserve and restore the natural environment for present and future generations.

RATIONALE

The ECO, in his 2009/2010 Annual Report, calls for a significant redefinition of the concept of 'Conservation'. The ECO states that, even with attempts to move toward sustainable development, current government policies are leading to long-term degradation of the environment for future generations. This environmental degradation includes the significant consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss. To address this situation we must make do with less and use what we have more wisely. The ECO calls for "a concept of conservation that is based on our new understanding of ecological processes and the appropriate use of resources. Our conservation ethic must consider the cumulative impacts of our activities, incorporate a precautionary approach to decision making and include intergenerational equity in our considerations. To be successfully applied, conservation ideals must be integrated into our economic system."

Fifteen (15) focused recommendations are made to the provincial government in the Report. Of these, conservation authorities have a key leadership role to play in addressing three of the fifteen recommendations, which are discussed in turn below.

1) ECO Recommendation: *that the Ministry of Natural Resources lead a co-ordinated afforestation strategy for southern Ontario, with a target of planting 1 billion trees of native species, to address the long-term ecological function of natural heritage systems and the impacts of climate change.*

TRCA's watershed planning, terrestrial natural heritage planning, stewardship and afforestation activities have helped to lay the groundwork for this recommendation. In the Report, the ECO notes that "Conservation Authorities (CAs) have a long history in tree planting and afforestation. Since the 1940's, CAs have provided planting services to landowners, including those that did not qualify for provincial programs. Over the past few years, on average, CAs have planted over 2.5 million trees each year."

The call for planting one billion trees is based, in part, on Environment Canada recommendations that all watersheds should have at least 30 per cent natural forest cover to support wildlife species, conserve biodiversity and maintain water quality and quantity. To buttress the need for an ambitious target of 1 billion trees and associated provincial support, the ECO relies upon research undertaken by TRCA in the Humber River watershed: "The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority estimates that at the current rate of tree planting, it would take 175 years to reach 30 per cent forest cover in the West Humber, Lower Humber and Black Creek subwatersheds."

In recent years, TRCA has played a valuable role in the development of urban forest studies. TRCA has been undertaking urban forest studies alongside its member municipalities to describe the urban forest and quantify its contribution to air quality, water management, biodiversity and to climate change mitigation. This work has assisted municipalities in strategically improving and managing the urban forest. The collaboration on urban forest studies across the TRCA jurisdiction, in its totality, represents the largest such study ever undertaken.

The afforestation strategy envisioned by the ECO would set out priorities for key planting areas, such as watersheds with less than 30 per cent forest cover, and incorporate climate change mitigation and adaption considerations. Should the province adopt this recommendation, it is clear that TRCA could play a key role in implementation based upon our work in afforestation throughout the TRCA jurisdiction.

3) ECO recommendation: *that the Ministry of the Environment take the lead on collecting appropriate hydrologic data, and creating models, to allow stormwater management planning to reflect changing climate patterns.*

This recommendation touches upon significant components of TRCA's work: stormwater management and climate change. The ECO in his report calls for a suite of innovative approaches to redefine Ontario's approach to stormwater management to assess vulnerability and adapt to climate change. According to the ECO, innovation is also needed to lower the ecological impact of stormwater. Finally, the ECO flags a key information gap related to outdated weather data on the intensity, duration and frequency (IDF) of storms, which is used to plan for and properly size new infrastructure. On each of these fronts, TRCA has been working in a leadership role with the Ministry of the Environment, municipal partners and others to find solutions to current stormwater management issues.

Earlier this year TRCA released *Getting to Carbon Neutral: A Guide for Canadian Municipalities*, which was commissioned by TRCA to develop and highlight various practical approaches municipalities can take to reduce their carbon emissions to address both climate change mitigation and adaption. Recently, as the first of its kind for Ontario, TRCA released a *Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Planning and Design Guide* along with Credit Valley Conservation to provide guidance on a suite of innovative low impact development approaches to reduce the ecological impact of stormwater management. With respect to IDF weather data, TRCA has been working with Environment Canada to explore revisions to the IDF data to address climate change. In each instance, TRCA has taken a leadership position to ensure that stormwater management planning in Ontario responds to current and anticipated future climate change issues.

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CONCLUSION

TRCA staff recommend that recommendations 2, 8 and 15 of the ECO in his 2009/2010 Annual Report be endorsed, as the ECO has underscored several vital areas of conservation including afforestation, integrated watershed planning, stormwater management and climate change. The ECO's message of redefining conservation brings to focus the vital work that conservation authorities play in supporting the values espoused in the Environmental Bill of Rights: to protect, conserve, and restore the natural environment for present and future generations.

Report prepared by: Chris Jones, extension 5718
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Date: November 8, 2010