



July 27, 2010

Hon. Linda Jeffrey
Minister of Natural Resources
Room 6630, Whitney Block
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

Re.: Working collaboratively to address the threat of invasive plants in the province of Ontario

Dear Minister Jeffrey,

Conservation Ontario represents Ontario's 36 conservation authorities. Conservation Ontario has been a member of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC) since its inception in 2007; our representative is Ken Towle.

In fulfillment of Recommendation 17 of the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy, 2005, the Province is preparing an Ontario Invasive Species Action Plan. Conservation Ontario supports OIPC's position that this Action Plan represents an important opportunity and that the Province should collaborate with the OIPC to develop and implement an effective invasive plant species strategy. A coordinated effort against invasive plants, increased resources and an improved policy framework across the province will be necessary to effectively address the significance of invasive plants to our environment and our economy.

Conservation Ontario endorses the following strategies for inclusion in an Ontario Invasive Species Action Plan, as proposed by the OIPC:

- Development of a scientifically-valid listing and tracking of invasive plant species by the OIPC and Natural Heritage Information Centre of existing invasive species and identifying other species in adjoining jurisdictions deemed to be an imminent threat;
- Development of a single tracking system for Ontario that enables notification of new locations (Rapid Response & Detection network), reporting of control efforts, tracking of progress and dialogue to support development of best practices (from research and development through to guidelines and action plans);
- A risk assessment process to assess the threat posed by additional non-indigenous species, and to add to the listing those that are determined to be a threat to Ontario's biodiversity or agriculture;

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- Development of a comprehensive Invasive Plants Act or an expanded Weed Control Act that would address agricultural weeds as well as other invasive species in both rural and urban contexts by prohibiting the sale or dissemination of plants on the listing;
- Development of public education campaigns to raise public awareness of the threat posed by invasive plant species; and
- Co-ordination with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to address the import or introduction of new plant species.

Conservation Ontario recognizes the OIPC's efforts to protect Ontario from invasive non-native plant species, which have become one of the most pressing biodiversity issues of our time. The Province is encouraged to work collaboratively with the OIPC to help stop the spread of invasive plant species and thereby protect Ontario's agricultural land, waterways and natural areas.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Ken Towle at (905) 885-8173 or Natasha Leahy at (905) 985-0716 ext. 228.

Sincerely,



Dick Hibma
Chair
Conservation Ontario

c.c. CA GMs/CAOs
Jon K. Grant, Chair, Ontario Biodiversity Council
Rachel Gagnon, Coordinator, Ontario Invasive Plant Council
Eric Boysen, Director, Biodiversity Branch, MNR