



# Media Release

## **Conservation Authorities Very Pleased With Investments Proposed for the Environment in the Federal 2021 Budget**

**NEWMARKET, ON (April 23, 2021)** - Conservation Ontario is very pleased that the Federal Government is proposing to take significant steps in their recent 2021 Budget to address climate change impacts and kick start the green economy.

“Conservation Ontario and its members look forward to partnering with the Federal Government to help deliver on the important environmental priorities identified in the budget,” commented Andy Mitchell, Chair of Conservation Ontario. Conservation Ontario represents Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities, who plan and deliver a wide range of watershed management programs.

General Manager of Conservation Ontario, Kim Gavine, pointed to some of the activities that line up with conservation authorities’ business. “There are a lot of great environmental investments being proposed in the 2021 Federal Budget including actions and funding around flood management, biodiversity, green infrastructure, environmental monitoring, wetland and shoreline restoration and support for local tourism.”

According to our conservation authority [watershed report cards](#), natural resources in Ontario are already stressed. This affects water quality and land cover. We have the largest population and we are an economic engine for Canada. This takes its toll on our environment and challenges community resiliency, Gavine pointed out.

“What the Federal government proposes to do through this budget is very important to address the climate change impacts that conservation authorities see across Ontario’s watersheds,” Gavine said. “They already support a lot of this type of work and they can do even more with additional resources.”

The Federal Budget proposes additional resources for wetland and shoreline restoration and protection as well as funding for flood infrastructure, floodplain mapping and recovering from disasters which is welcomed by conservation authorities. Managing flooding is a keystone program for conservation authorities. Together, their flood management programs protect lives, property and prevent well over \$150 million annually in damages and business disruptions. The lower threshold of funding available for Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund for new, small scale projects and to support projects that help small, rural and remote, northern and Indigenous communities adapt to climate change impacts is also very welcome.

To protect nature, the Federal Government proposes to conserve more natural lands, address biodiversity loss and protect species at risk. “This is also important to us because conservation authorities are the second largest landowners in Ontario. Their conservation areas and other natural

lands protect important water sources and biodiversity such as forests, wetlands and other habitats for birds, wildlife and fish,” Gavine said. “We can do more.”

The 2021 Budget also makes a commitment to support more green infrastructure projects in order to build local community resiliency. Green infrastructure protects water quality and soil health and helps significantly to address stormwater runoff. A number of conservation authorities have programs and services that implement a variety of green infrastructure activities such as stormwater management, water quality protection, water conservation and heat island cooling. Much more could be done to target more areas of particular concern.

Other proposed investments that conservation authorities could support include:

- the Clean Water Agency, its mandate and identification of opportunities to support more resilient water and irrigation infrastructure,
- the proposed ‘census of the environment’ to help monitor environmental trends, and
- local tourism investments to attract visitors and help communities recover from COVID-19.

Conservation authorities have close to [300 conservation areas](#) which are easily accessible to Ontario residents and provide a wide range of outdoor activities for all seasons.

“The conservation areas attract over 8 million visitors a year,” Gavine said. “Once they finish their hike or other outdoor activity, they often visit nearby communities to also take advantage of the restaurants, cultural attractions and events that take place nearby. In this way, conservation authorities can also contribute to local economies who need to recover from pandemic conditions.”

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### **About Conservation Ontario**

Conservation Ontario is a non-profit association that represents Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities. Conservation Authorities are community-based watershed management agencies, whose mandate is to undertake watershed-based programs to protect people and property from flooding, and other natural hazards, and to conserve natural resources for economic, social and environmental benefits. Conservation Authorities are legislated under the *Conservation Authorities Act, 1946*.

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