



April 3, 2009

The Honourable John Gerretsen  
Minister of the Environment  
12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
135 St Clair Ave. W  
Toronto, ON  
M4V 1P5

**RE: Development of integrated Natural Heritage Systems Plans by Conservation Authorities**

Dear Minister,

On March 2, 2009, Conservation Ontario Council met and considered a Staff Report regarding the Natural Infrastructure Collaborative of Ontario, at which time the following resolution was passed (C.W. #02/09):

***WHEREAS the health of our Natural Infrastructure, which includes our Natural Heritage Systems, is key to public well-being, a prosperous economy and a major contributor to the management of climate change;***

***AND WHEREAS Natural Systems provide the only space where native species and ecosystem function and services can be maintained;***

***AND WHEREAS habitat and species will not survive without a long term integrated Natural Heritage System Plan to sustain and enhance ecosystem functions and services;***

***AND WHEREAS Conservation Ontario is dedicated to conserving, restoring, developing and managing resources on a watershed basis;***

***THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Conservation Authorities pursue partnerships with municipalities and the Ministry of Natural Resources to complete as soon as possible, comprehensive natural heritage system inventories and create integrated Natural Heritage System Plans to protect, enhance and interconnect significant natural areas;***

***AND THAT Conservation Authorities continue to press for effective/appropriate provincial legislation, regulations, policies, and guidelines as well as municipal by-laws to permanently***

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*protect, interconnect and integrate significant natural heritage areas to promote healthy ecosystem functions, services and biodiversity;*

*AND THAT Natural Heritage System Plans should identify land acquisition, natural area protection strategies, stewardship and restoration opportunities with targets, associated milestones, budgets and action plans;*

*AND FINALLY THAT the Ministers of Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Energy and Infrastructure and Environment so be informed, as well as the Chair of NICO.*

Please contact myself or Don Pearson (ext 231) if you have any questions or require additional information and we would be pleased to discuss our position in more detail.

Sincerely,



Dick Hibma  
Chair, Conservation Ontario

c.c. All Conservation Authority General Managers/CAOs