



July 10, 2009

Peter Orphanos
Chairman, Natural Infrastructure Collaborative of Ontario
porphanos@rogers.com

RE: Conservation Authorities support to the Natural Infrastructure Collaborative of Ontario

Dear Mr. Orphanos,

Conservation Ontario represents Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities. Conservation Authorities were created in 1946 by an Act of the Provincial Legislature and are mandated to ensure the conservation, restoration and responsible management of Ontario's water, land and natural habitats through programs that balance human, environmental and economic needs. Conservation Authorities, particularly those in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), have extensive natural heritage expertise, which is supported through funding from their member municipalities. This expertise extends from field inventories to input/advice to the land use planning process. As watershed managers, the importance of protecting and restoring our natural infrastructure is understood and supported.

On March 2, 2009, Conservation Ontario Council (Council) met and considered a Staff Report regarding the Natural Infrastructure Collaborative of Ontario.

At that time Council passed the following resolution (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 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.

At this same meeting, Council formally acknowledged that the Natural Infrastructure Collaborative of Ontario (NICO) advocates for the strong and permanent protection and restoration of Ontario's natural infrastructure, with an immediate focus on the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan, and endorsed the establishment of a team of natural heritage staff experts from the Greater Golden Horseshoe Conservation Authorities to provide support to NICO (C.W. #01/09). This team is being led by Judi Orendorff, Director, Lands Management and Conservation Areas, Credit Valley Conservation. Updates from the team will be provided to Conservation Ontario for the benefit of all Conservation Authorities engaged in the protection and restoration of natural systems.

Please contact myself (ext 231) or Bonnie Fox (ext 223) if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Don Pearson
General Manager, Conservation Ontario

c.c. All Conservation Authority General Managers/CAOs