



Critical importance of water resources, natural heritage and climate change recognized and supported in the review of land use plans for Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In response to the Province of Ontario's Coordinated Land Use Planning Review Advisory Panel's report released today, the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF) is pleased that the report places major emphasis on the protection of water resources and natural heritage in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and specifically in the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Greenbelt Protected Countryside and the Niagara Escarpment.

The Panel recommends developing a natural heritage system enhancement strategy for the four plans, including priorities and resources for securement, stewardship, restoration and enhancement of natural heritage features and functions – all key recommendations of the ORMF in its submission to the Province. Other key recommendations call for protection of source waters and integrated watershed planning across municipalities and Conservation Authority boundaries to cover all four plan areas.

The ORMF is particularly pleased that the Advisory Panel, chaired by David Crombie, recommends the creation of an oversight entity, which would include the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, for the four provincial plans (the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, and the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan). Amongst its responsibilities, this entity would oversee a funding mechanism to support grassroots efforts that contribute to the goals of the four plans.

"As a distinct and important ecological entity, the Oak Ridges Moraine requires dedicated management and a coordination body that will ensure we achieve the objectives of a strengthened Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan", said Michael Jolliffe, Provincial Appointee to the ORMF Board.

"The Oak Ridges Moraine should be preserved as a distinct entity with a clear focus on its unique geological, ecological, hydrological, recreational, social and economic attributes," continued Jolliffe. "We're very pleased that the Advisory Panel has recognized the Moraine's importance. Overall, many of the recommendations reflect the ORMF's input which was based on extensive research and stakeholder outreach."

The ORMF has some concern that many of the Panel's recommendations were overarching. Today's Advisory Panel report highlights the key issues and contains some excellent recommendations. But it doesn't go far enough in explicitly referencing the specifics of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and addressing the concerns of the ORMF and the Moraine's stakeholders, particularly as they relate to Plan implementation. "We expect these to be addressed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in its next round of stakeholder meetings over the coming months and that the Panel's broad recommendations will translate into specifics for the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan", said Rob Messervey, ORMF Vice-Chair.

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About the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review

Today's release of the independent Advisory Panel's report on the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review, chaired by David Crombie, is the culmination of over a year's work and follows consultation with over 3,000 organizations and individuals concerned about conservation of key land use plans in Ontario. The Review encompasses the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

About the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation

The Oak Ridges Moraine is the heart of the Greenbelt. It is an essential water recharge zone that directly supplies 250,000 Ontarians with clean drinking water and feeds the 80 rivers and major creeks that flow north and south from its hills, sustaining over six million Ontarians. It provides essential ecological services by capturing rain turning it into a valuable groundwater resource and by controlling erosion and reducing floods. This habitat-rich land is home to over 900 species of plants, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Its forests – extensive by southern Ontario standards – produce clean air, mitigating the effects of climate change.

Protecting the integrity of the Moraine supports the Province's commitment to effective water management and acknowledges the need to think strategically about the importance of water availability and supply. It also advances critical planning priorities that include healthy, sustainable communities, smart growth and valuing our natural and cultural heritage.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF) was established in 2002 to provide support and encouragement for activities that preserve, protect, and restore the environmental integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

As the leading coordinating organization for stewardship, land securement and ecological restoration on the Moraine for the past 13+ years, the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation has played an active role in the provincial consultation process and in May, 2015, submitted a series of recommendations to the review process. With today's release of the much-anticipated provincial report, the ORMF is encouraged that many of the key issues raised in our recommendations have been addressed. We reinforce the importance of ensuring that the specific policy changes needed to protect the unique landscape and features of the Oak Ridges Moraine are addressed in the next phase of the plan review in 2016.

A copy of the ORMF report [Sustaining our Environment, Planning for our Future: Key Recommendations to Inform the 2015 Provincial Review of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan](#) is available online.

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