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Press Release, February 27, 2015

CAMC Hails Provincial Government's Appointment of former Toronto Mayor to Review Oak Ridges Moraine Plan

The Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition (CAMC) applauds Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne in appointing former Toronto mayor David Crombie to review the Greenbelt Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) Conservation Plan. Announced Friday, Crombie will revisit the 10-year-old Greenbelt protection legislation that includes the ecologically significant ORM.

To assist in the review, the CAMC released its environmental Report Card that reveals efforts to date to protect the ORM have been successful in safeguarding existing forests, aquatic habitat and groundwater the region's residents rely on. However, the report also identifies that further work is vital to ensure the preservation of this significant natural heritage landscape.

The Report Card on the Environmental Health of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Adjacent Greenbelt Lands, released today by The Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition (CAMC), says that while efforts to protect the ecologically significant lands have been positive, far more must be done. In its Report Card, the CAMC assigned grades of only "fair," "poor", or "very poor" to the water quality in almost half of the streams and rivers assessed—a clear indication that further restoration work is essential. Planned developments, infrastructure projects and the impacts of climate change will place increasing pressure on the environmental health of the ORM in the years ahead.

"Up to now, we've been successful at preserving the status quo of the ORM's significant natural heritage," said Mike Walters, CAMC Chair and Chief Administrative Officer of Lake Simcoe Region Conservation. "But additional restoration and enhancement work must begin almost immediately if we are to preserve the progress made to date. We need robust enforcement of existing by-laws, new administrative tools, and stable long-term funding to expand our efforts."

The ORM provides essential ecosystem services, such as reducing flooding and erosion, cleaning the air, and replenishing drinking water. Its farms provide fresh, delicious food. To safeguard these services, the Report Card recommends a number of stewardship projects and activities that the province, Conservation Authorities, municipalities, environment groups and local farmers, businesses and residents should undertake.

- Plant more trees, shrubs and other native vegetation to expand forest patches, link greenspaces, control invasive species and provide habitat for threatened species.
 - Renaturalize the banks of rivers and streams to improve water quality and moderate stream flows.
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- Enforce strict standards for all new ORM development and infrastructure to control erosion, ensure the use of uncontaminated fill and minimize the release of sediment into streams.
- Continue ongoing and expanded monitoring of environmental conditions to fill gaps in the data, reveal developing problems and gauge whether restoration activities have been successful.

“Using the detailed scientific data in the Report Card, together with the watershed plans developed by individual Conservation Authorities, we can target exactly where this restoration work should be done,” said Walters. “We anticipate working closely with the province on their recently announced review of protection plans for the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine.”

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The CAMC is a coalition of nine Conservation Authorities that manage the watersheds covering the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM). Formed in 2000, the Coalition collaborates with numerous groups and individuals in order to: take action for the protection and restoration of the ORM; provide expert advice on environmental planning and policies; undertake science-based research; and provide opportunities for recreation. A full copy of the Report Card and links to the Coalition members is available on-line at www.morainecoalition.ca
