

MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Land Trusts from across Ontario meet in London

- **Minister of Natural Resources to speak Thursday, October 23**
- **Field trip open to media participation – shuttle bus leaves Lamplighter Inn at 9 AM Saturday, October 25**

London (Monday, October 20, 2008) – The Ontario land protection community will hold their annual conference at the Lamplighter Inn, London, Thursday October 23rd – Saturday, October 25th this week. The event is co-hosted by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and two London-based organizations, the Carolinian Canada Coalition and the Thames Talbot Land Trust.

Minister of Natural Resources Donna Cansfield will open the three day conference at 6:30 pm on Thursday evening. She will be followed by Dr. Dr. John Howard's keynote address "Ecosystem Health - Balancing Health Care with Land Care." The full conference agenda is available at: www.olta.ca and www.carolinian.org.

Protected areas are internationally recognized as a major tool in conserving species and ecosystems. However, there is wide variation in types of protected area, objectives of management and degree of protection. Michelle Kanter, Executive Director, Carolinian Canada Coalition says, "Less than 1% of southwestern Ontario lands are formally protected. On October 23-25th, we are connecting with the most influential people in conservation today to share ideas and get a sense of what we can and must do, collectively, to counter fragmentation of our natural landscapes."

Over half of Ontario's land trusts have no staff and rely exclusively on volunteers. Fortunately many of these volunteers have a professional background that provides some of the needed expertise in land conservation. The wide range of training needed to operate a land trust will be covered in over 20 workshops, field trips and plenary sessions facilitated by experts in natural heritage inventory and mapping, fund-raising and fund management, real estate transactions and legal tools such as conservation agreements, at the three day conference.

A conference highlight will be the Saturday morning field trip to Meadowlily Nature Preserve organized by **Thames Talbot Land Trust**. The tour will provide insight into the importance of local land trusts and showcase the natural features of the 15 acre preserve, located in London on the South Branch of the Thames River.

Conference organizers acknowledge the valuable support from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Parks Research Forum of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Environment Canada-Ontario Region to make this conference a success.

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OLTA is a strong and successful alliance of land trusts that encompass organizations protecting wilderness, agricultural and other lands, water and facilities that have a natural, cultural or heritage significance to communities throughout Ontario.

Land trusts help to link public and private stewardship for ecosystem recovery. As registered charities, they receive donated or purchased lands and conservation agreements in important natural, cultural and agricultural areas. These organizations work to achieve a healthy balance between development and conservation in their communities, improving the quality of life in rural and urban areas by preserving natural and cultural heritage.

Carolinian Canada Coalition is a non-profit network of diverse groups and landowners who collaborate to steward southwestern Ontario's unique habitat network, green infrastructure to support thriving wild and human communities in harmony for generations.