



EARTHROOTS



## **DON'T IGNORE THE MORAINE!**

*Conservation groups ask Province to protect Ontario's rain barrel*

### **For immediate release**

**Toronto, November 29, 2011** – Echoing months of warnings from Ontario conservation organizations, a new report from the provincial environmental commissioner Gord Miller underscores the need for tougher land use and water monitoring rules on the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Nevertheless, the Province recently denied a request to strengthen protective policies which could put an end to the multiple environmental threats to the moraine that include massive water taking and dumping contaminated fill in abandoned sites.

“Ontarians have been lulled into a false sense of security because of the Oak Ridges Moraine Act and Plan,” says Debbe Crandall, Executive Director of STORM (Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition). “The reality is that the legislation has too many loopholes, which allow developers, gravel companies and other industrial users to cause irreparable damage to a highly sensitive area that supports the headwaters for Greater Toronto’s 65 river systems.”

Applauding Commissioner Miller’s findings, the Moraine Can’t Wait coalition, made up of STORM, Earthroots and Ontario Nature, is profoundly disappointed that the government has chosen not to proceed immediately with a legislative review of the Oak Ridges Moraine Act.

The Moraine Can’t Wait campaign was launched after the release of eight stewardship studies prepared by the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation and available at [www.moraineforlife.org/resources/measuringsuccess.php](http://www.moraineforlife.org/resources/measuringsuccess.php).

Among the findings:

- Only one-third of all stream corridors on the moraine are functioning as healthy waterways.
- Many water courses continue to have high e-coli and phosphorus levels.
- Rare prairie grassland and savannah habitats, present in small quantities on the moraine, are under constant threat as is habitat for interior forest species and species-at-risk.



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Based on these warning signals, the Foundation submitted an application under the Environmental Bill of Rights, requesting that the legislation be reviewed in advance of its scheduled review in 2015.

Says Josh Garfinkel, Senior Campaigner with Earthroots, “Waiting for the formal provincial review in 2015 means further ecological damage at the expense of the well-being of communities on and adjacent to the moraine.”

Adds Victoria Foote, Ontario Nature’s director of communications, “By refusing to address the weaknesses in their conservation policies, the Province runs a real risk of undermining the original vision for the moraine: that an irreplaceable source of drinking water for a quarter of a million people be permanently protected.”

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*Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing more than 30,000 members and supporters and 140 member groups across Ontario (charitable registration # 10737 8952 RR0001). For more information, visit [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org).*

*Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM) is focused on protecting the ecological integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Since 1989, STORM has been working at the local and regional levels to ensure that municipalities make good planning decisions to protect its ecological and hydrological functions. For more information, visit [www.stormcoalition.org](http://www.stormcoalition.org).*

*Earthroots is a grassroots conservation organization that works aggressively to protect wilderness, wildlife and watersheds in Ontario through research, education and action. Our dedicated staff and focused campaigns have achieved effective protection of threatened ecosystems for over 20 years on behalf of our approximately 12,000 supporters in the province. We use many techniques to propel issues forward including public education, advocacy, primary and secondary research, media awareness and creative peaceful activism. For more information, visit [www.earthroots.org](http://www.earthroots.org).*