



Media release

Toronto City Hall Stands Up for Oak Ridges Moraine *Conservation Groups Urge Province to Follow Suit*

(March 6, 2012) – In response to urgent calls from three environmental organizations about contaminated soil dumped on one of the province’s most important watersheds, Toronto Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam submitted a motion, seconded by Councillor Peter Milczyn, at City Hall to address soil testing procedures. According to Earthroots, Ontario Nature and Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM) – which together make up the Moraine Can’t Wait campaign – regulatory gaps allow for the unmonitored disposal of thousands of tonnes of fill onto the Oak Ridges Moraine, often described as southern Ontario’s rain barrel.

“Once I was made aware of this problem, I knew that the City had to take responsibility so that our activities don’t inadvertently pollute the source of our drinking water,” said Councillor Wong-Tam. “We’re prepared to do our part and will work with others to stop this from happening.”

Random soil testing has revealed that contaminated fill was dumped into an abandoned aggregate site on Lakeridge Road, a spot that is classified as an area of high aquifer vulnerability on the moraine. Recently, *The Globe and Mail* reported that soil contaminated with gasoline – seven times the provincial limit – had been dumped on a private property in north Pickering, also located on the moraine.

“Premier McGuinty has a perfect opportunity to support Toronto’s efforts to protect the source of our drinking water,” said Debbe Crandall, Executive Director of STORM. “Our biggest fear is that thousands of truckloads carrying commercial fill that is dumped onto the moraine will leach into the underground water systems.”

The Moraine Can’t Wait campaign (www.morainecantwait.ca) has collected more than 8,000 signed postcards addressed to Premier McGuinty asking that the Province step in to prevent further degradation of this highly sensitive landscape. On Thursday at 9:30am, the groups will be escorted by MPP Mike Colle to deliver the postcards to the Premier at Queen’s Park.

“We’re hoping that the Premier will listen to the thousands of people telling the government that the problem of contaminated fill won’t go away by itself,” said Josh Garfinkel, Senior Campaigner with Earthroots.

The Oak Ridges Moraine watershed provides drinking water directly to over 250,000 people and indirectly to millions more. Despite provincial legislation aimed at stopping the destruction of the 160-kilometre long moraine, gaps in protection have exposed its vulnerability.

“The Province re-scheduled their review of the protection legislation for 2015,” said Victoria Foote, Ontario Nature’s Director of Communications. “But between now and then, a lot is going wrong on the moraine, putting wildlife and people at increasing risk.”

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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.

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.

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.