



## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Groups urge public involvement in review of Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt plans

Toronto, ON – This afternoon the provincial government launched the much anticipated public review of the plans that protect the Oak Ridges Moraine, Niagara Escarpment and Greenbelt. This review is an important opportunity to strengthen these plans to further protect water, nature and communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

“When these plans were first introduced over 10 years ago, they represented the leading edge in conservation planning and protection of our invaluable land and water resources,” says Debbe Crandall, policy advisor for Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition. “This review positions the province to re-commit to a strong environmental agenda by strengthening these plans and eliminating policy gaps that have emerged, with the goal of leaving a protected landscape for the next generation of Ontarians,” she adds.

A key feature of this area is the Oak Ridges Moraine, a 160-kilometre long landform stretching from Caledon and the Niagara Escarpment in the west to the Trent River system in the east. The moraine, together with the Niagara Escarpment and Protected Countryside, comprise Ontario’s Greenbelt; over 720,000 hectares of protected natural habitat, productive agricultural lands and unique rural communities.

The moraine provides countless benefits to communities at no cost,” says Joshua Wise, Greenway Program manager at Ontario Nature. “It stores and filters our water, helps to control floods, regulates climate, and provides habitat for wildlife as well as places for outdoor recreation.”

This review is an opportunity to make sure that these plans remain true to their intent – the ongoing protection, enhancement and restoration of southern Ontario’s natural heritage. It’s not good enough to protect islands of nature; we need to connect these embattled landscapes. This review should strengthen, not simply maintain, southern Ontario’s natural legacy.

“This review of the plans provides an opportunity to address activities like the dumping of contaminated soil, unmonitored water takings and sprawling developments that were approved more than a decade ago and still threaten this landscape,” says Josh Garfinkel, senior campaigner at Earthroots. “Our groups are working with community members to make sure a strong grassroots voice is heard throughout the review.”

The province also announced the creation of an expert panel chaired by David Crombie to help lead the review. “We are pleased to see the government has enlisted someone with such a strong track record. We expect this panel to help ensure a fair and transparent public review process,” says Joyce Chau, executive director of EcoSpark. “Our partnership will be active throughout the review to engage Ontarians and demonstrate the incredible public support for the moraine and Greenbelt.”

The Oak Ridges Moraine Partnership for 2015 consists of four committed organizations – [Earthroots](#), [EcoSpark](#), [Ontario Nature](#) and [STORM coalition](#). All groups have been preparing for the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation and Greenbelt plans review for many years by monitoring issues that threaten the hydrological and ecological integrity of the moraine and encouraging civic engagement in moraine protection.

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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 150 member groups across Ontario (charitable registration # 10737 8952 RR001). 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).

**EcoSpark** is an environmental charity whose mission is to empower communities to take an active role in protecting and sustaining their local environment. We do this by giving people the tools for education, monitoring and influencing positive change. To date, we have directly worked with over 57,000 people from across Southern Ontario in over 20 watersheds. For more information, visit [www.ecospark.ca](http://www.ecospark.ca).