



Two extensive geomorphological features of the Greater Toronto Bioregion warrant particular attention in the coming decade, to ensure that remedial action directed to degraded areas is not counter-balanced by new environmental damage in currently high-quality areas.

The Oak Ridges Moraine – a 160 km (99.4 miles) ridge of land formed by glacial sediments – has been the topic of considerable discussion over the past decade in response to growing urban development and resource extraction pressures. The Moraine includes the headwaters of most of the bioregion's watersheds and is one of the last continuous corridors of greenspace and wildlife habitats left in southern Ontario.

In 1991, the Ontario government declared a provincial interest in the Moraine and embarked on a multi-stakeholder exercise to develop *The Oak Ridges Moraine Strategy for the Greater Toronto Area: An Ecosystem Approach for Long-Term Protection and Management*. The Strategy was never adopted by the Provincial government, leaving a vacuum in public policy for this critical area.

A number of initiatives are underway to address this vacuum. They include a joint regional initiative involving the Regions of Peel, York and Durham; three private member's bills by MPPs Steve Gilchrist, Mike Colle, and Shelley Martel (with Marilyn Churley); a groundwater management strategy for Peel, York and Durham Regions through a municipal - conservation authority partnership; a joint initiative by the nine conservation authorities that share the Moraine; the establishment of an Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust; and an action plan coordinated by STORM (Save the Oak Ridges Moraine) Coalition, Earthroots and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

The effectiveness of these initiatives will be severely limited without a comprehensive policy framework under Ontario's Planning Act. This would provide consistent support and direction to the plans and growth management strategies of local and regional municipalities, as well as a much-needed statement of Provincial policy to the Ontario Municipal Board.

The Town of Whitby recently adopted a secondary plan for the Taunton North area that gives an exemplary level of attention to the protection of the Lake Iroquois shoreline aquifer and wildlife habitats. Based on an environmental audit, the plan designates areas that are too sensitive to develop, areas that require an environmental impact study, and areas that can be developed without further study.

The little-known Lake Iroquois shoreline – a band of bluffs and beaches created some 12,500 years ago by the lake that preceded Lake Ontario – also needs greater awareness and actions to protect its aquifer, headwater and natural habitat corridor functions.

Finally, along the less disturbed areas of Lake Ontario shoreline, the concept of Biodiversity Investment Areas (BIAs) offers potential for new approaches to protection. BIAs are broad coastal areas along the Great Lakes that contain clusters of exceptional

biodiversity values, including rare species and communities, unusually diverse landscapes and species, and especially productive habitats. In a series of studies prepared for the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conferences, BIAs have been proposed for nearshore lands, wetlands, and aquatic habitats, including the rugged coastal areas and islands from Presqu'île eastwards to Kingston. This designation would encourage governments and community groups to direct their attention to how to protect the natural features within these areas of high quality.



DEVELOP AND APPLY NEW TOOLS

During the first decade of waterfront regeneration, many new tools were developed to put the ecosystem approach and nine principles into practice. They cover a wide range of activities – brownfield redevelopment; integrated shoreline management planning; habitat restoration; stormwater management; trail planning, design and maintenance; and heritage preservation. Their application is reflected in the case studies in this book, and many of them will continue to be useful into the next decade (see Appendix B). But our knowledge of the best ways to do things is constantly evolving, based on monitoring of previous experiences, the development of new techniques and ideas, and the emergence of new challenges such as global climate change. Applying the collaborative approaches we developed in the previous decade will be essential to help us to stay at the leading edge and bring the best available knowledge and experience to bear on our work.

New tools could be useful in many forums: new approaches to financing and incentives,

environmental management, heritage conservation, recreation use management, and many other areas. In many cases, the biggest challenge seems to be the ability to actually implement new techniques, even when they offer clear advantages. Identifying changes to legislation, policies, or local by-laws to enable implementation can help bring these new tools to reality. For example, in September 2000 the Province announced the appointment of a senior level Advisory Panel to make recommendations on legislative and regulatory changes as well as other steps that can be taken to spark re-investment in brownfields.

Learning and discussion opportunities should not just involve governments, but also include developers, landowners, and community activists in applying the ecosystem approach and the nine waterfront principles. They could also promote innovative means of implementation, such as the “Smart Growth” approach now being promoted as an alternative to urban sprawl.



In the Niagara Region, our vision to create a vibrant, international community is about more than economic benefits. It is also about confidence. Confidence in ourselves, in what we can accomplish together, and in a shared vision of our future. And even beyond that, it is about obligation, stewardship, and commitment to the kind of community we will leave for successive generations.

**Bill Connor, CEO,
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Smart Growth

The countryside of the Greater Toronto Bioregion, including the headwaters of most of our rivers and streams, is under pressure from urban sprawl. The concept of Smart Growth is not new, but it represents the most recent and comprehensive packaging of a range of principles designed to meet anticipated community growth while minimizing impacts on the environment. Among leaders in this approach are Oregon (which was the first to impose an urban boundary in 1979), Colorado, Maryland, and in Canada, the Greater Vancouver Area. The guiding principles include:

- Strengthening existing urban areas with mixed use, mixed density developments, and intensification and recycling of existing buildings
- Supporting these urban areas with necessary expenditures to improve public transportation, social amenities, and hard infrastructure
- Protection of important environmental resources, particularly rural lands subject to environmental pressures. For example, in the case of the Rural Legacy Program in Maryland, State funds have been allocated to purchase conservation easements for agricultural lands as well as forests and natural areas
- Fiscal responsibility by providing public funds for infrastructure only in areas designated urban and tightly restricting uses in rural areas
- Understanding the true cost of urban expansion and using a full cost account approach including future infrastructure and servicing costs