



**Lake Simcoe
Region
Conservation
Authority**

November 17, 2011

Sent via email:

Mr. Bill Hughes
Commissioner of Finance
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Hughes,

We are pleased to accept the invitation to present our 2012 operating and capital budget to the Region's Finance and Administration Committee on Thursday, December 1, 2011. As I will be out of the country on this date, Jocelyn Lee, General Manager, Corporate and Financial Services, will present LSRCA's budget.

Further to your letter of October 28, 2011, we do have a request for additional Business Case funds beyond the 4.5% maximum increase, and a summary of our request is included. The four program areas identified for additional funding are:

Education Program	\$ 50,000
LEAP Program	\$ 200,000
Information Management Systems	\$ 46,000
Development/Enhancement of Sheppard's Bush	<u>\$ 22,000</u>
Total	<u>\$ 318,000</u>

Following are the details related to each of these requests:

Education Program

Today more than ever, society understands how essential a healthy environment is to community and economic health. Through education and engagement, LSRCA builds awareness, knowledge, understanding *and caring* that leads to and supports positive action. Responding to significant changes in the outdoor, environmental education sector – which have significantly impacted York Region youth – LSRCA has established the **redesign and revitalization of its education program** as a strategic priority in its new Strategic Plan, 2011-2014. For over 30 years, over 2600 students from York Region participated in multi-day, overnight outdoor education programming each year. In more recent years, the Authority established and now delivers one day education programs at Scanlon Creek and in schools and communities in York Region and across the watershed.

The additional cost to the Region of \$50,000 in 2012 (a cost of 25 cents per year per York Region watershed resident) will provide appropriate funding to the Education Program to allow the needed changes to take place, repositioning the Authority to deliver educational programming that fosters sustainable lifestyles. The funding will support the human resource changes that will be necessary to staff the program with the right team, and will provide funds for direct program costs related to the change in delivery.

LEAP Program

The Landowner Environmental Assistance Program (LEAP) is a partnership between the LSRCA and its member municipalities. It is watershed-based, community-driven, and supported with funding provided by LSRCA's municipal partners that is leveraged by LSRCA through partnerships with public (local, provincial and federal) and private agencies, foundations, and corporate partners. LEAP provides technical and financial support to watershed landowners to help them complete environmental projects that improve local surface and ground water quality, reduce phosphorus inputs and soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity. Through LEAP, the costs associated with implementing restoration projects are shared amongst the broader community that will benefit from them.

Through Special Capital, York Region has provided over \$2.1M to LSRCA for the LEAP during the period of 2006 and 2010. With the total value of these projects at over \$4.5M, LSRCA has secured \$3 through partnerships for every grant dollar provided by York Region. In order **to maintain the necessary staffing resources to provide outreach and support to landowners, and also provide the necessary incentives to ensure the completion of important projects**, an increase in program support funding is required. By receiving an additional \$200,000 for the delivery of LEAP the Conservation Authority will be able to continue to deliver a strong program that will allow for the continued implementation of environmental restoration projects that ensure a healthy and robust environment for York Region residents.

Program Information Management Systems/IT

The Authority is required to comply with the planning and regulations requirement of Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*. To meet these requirements, the Authority requires very accurate and up-to-date information in the form of layers that can be overlaid onto maps to allow the Watershed Planning department to make qualified decisions about permits. The environmental data is maintained and kept accessible by the Authority's Geographical Information Systems (GIS)/Information Technology (IT) staff. The data is shared with the Region to allow their infrastructure work to be done in an environmental context. Conversely, the Region maintains a broad spectrum of infrastructure layers that are updated regularly and shared with the Conservation Authority. Through our partnership, key information is created once at the respective organizations and then used by both to make sound planning decisions. The Authority's GIS/IT staff developed a **web mapping tool** of the various layers (with Authority and Regional information combined) to assist the public and developers in reviewing their own properties without having to come into the Authority office to make inquiries. This is a **very valuable service** that has been provided to various users of the watershed information. To keep the required information current and broadly accessible, the GIS/IT staff at the Authority are involved in a significant amount of back-end work.

The additional cost to the Region of \$46,000 in 2012 will provide appropriate funding to the GIS/IT department to **allow continued support and maintenance of the data layers required for planning and regulations work**.

Development/Enhancement of Sheppard's Bush

A Management Plan was completed in 2009, for Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area in Aurora and the following goal was developed:

Sheppard's Bush will be managed to provide a functional example of Aurora's natural and cultural heritage, including opportunities for education and outdoor recreation.

In order to **implement current management plan** priorities as they relate to the development and enhancement of Sheppard' Bush, LSRCA is seeking an additional \$22,000 in funding in 2012. The projects that are scheduled to be completed include:

- Log cabin and evaporator hut upgrades to allow for spring, summer and fall program delivery. Enhancements to include window replacement, skylight installation, woodshed enhancements (flooring), lighting and electrical wiring upgrades, floor insulation and wood stove installation \$18,000. The estimated cost of these upgrades is \$18,000 and this amount has been accommodated within the 4.5% funding.
- **Enhancements to trails and trail linkages to municipal trail systems**, including installation of additional benches along trails. The estimated cost of these enhancements is \$18,000 and this amount is part of the additional ask of \$22,000.
- **Development of a community garden** (site prep/cultivation, tool shed and water line). The estimated cost of this project is \$4,000 and this amount is part of the \$22,000 additional ask.

It is essential that the lands in the Conservation Authority's ownership are managed in a sustainable manner, and maintained in order to provide a safe and secure recreation environment for all visitors.

We appreciate all the support York Region has provided LSRCA, and without your commitment to the environment we would not have been able to make the significant progress to our watershed that we have done. Yet there remains a substantial amount of work to be done to lower the phosphorus inputs and protect the environmental features of the watershed. Partnerships are essential if we are to achieve a watershed state that is sustainable for future generations. Through our work with partners and our integrated watershed management approach, we are confident we will be successful.

Sincerely,

Original letter signed by:

D. Gayle Wood
Chief Administrative Officer

c: Mayor Virginia Hackson (Town of East Gwillimbury), Chair, LSRCA
Mayor Robert Grossi (Town of Georgina), LSRCA Board Member
Mayor Geoff Dawe (Town of Aurora), LSRCA Board Member
Kelly Strueby, York Region
Jocelyn Lee, LSRCA

