

6

OAK RIDGES MORaine LAND TRUST ONE-YEAR AGREEMENT EXTENSION

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends that Council adopt the recommendations contained in the following report dated October 28, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services and the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize the extension of the 2006-2008 agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust for a period of one year at a cost of \$40,000.
2. The Regional Chair and Clerk be authorized to sign the necessary agreements, subject to the review and approval of Legal Services as to form and content.
3. Staff report back to Committee and Regional Council with securement partnership and agreement recommendations resulting from the Natural Heritage Strategic Directions review process.

2. PURPOSE

This report seeks Regional Council authorization for a one-year extension to the existing 2006-2008 Greening Strategy agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, supporting its efforts in securing conservation lands within the Region. This one-year extension will allow for a continued partnership between the Region and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust until a new agreement can be executed to reflect improvements to the Greening securement program, expected to be developed through the ongoing Natural Heritage Sustainability process.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2002, the Region entered into their first agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust. The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust is a charitable, non-profit organization established to protect significant land on the Oak Ridges Moraine using a variety of land securement tools, primarily conservation easements, bequests and occasionally ownership. After several years of successful implementing the agreement, the Region and the Land Trust entered into a new revised three-year agreement for the period of 2006-2008. This agreement is an implementation tool of the Greening Strategy which

helps the Region and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust leverage funds and in kind resources from additional partners, including the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, Provincial and Federal Greenlands Funding, and the Conservation Authorities.

Subsequently, in January 2008, Regional Council endorsed the Natural Heritage Strategic Directions Report which set out actions which will affect our agreement with the Land Trust. These actions are being undertaken under the Natural Heritage Review expected to be completed by the fall of 2009.

While the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust agreement has resulted in significant achievements towards our greening objectives, improvements can be made to the agreement to take into consideration the Natural Heritage Strategic Directions approved by Regional Council. This report outlines the rationale for extending the existing agreement until output from the review of actions under the Natural Heritage Directions report can be considered.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Since 2002, the terms of the agreements between the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and York Region have provided for Regional financial support towards the administrative costs incurred by the Land Trust when securing property or conservation easement donations or bequests. In 2006, the agreement was revised to more explicitly state the terms of this financial support as follows:

The Region, at its option, may contribute funds towards the acquisition of lands under the Program, on a case-by-case basis, to cover up to 50% of the costs, including:

1. Expenses reasonably incurred in order to complete transactions for the acquisition of lands under the Program, including title searches, land transfer tax, appraisals, survey costs and the cost of conducting environmental assessments, not to exceed \$15,000 per property.
2. Preparation of a management plan.

In addition to property specific administrative costs, the agreement also provides \$5,000 annually to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust for education, stewardship and marketing initiatives regarding the Program or properties secured under the Program.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust agreement has resulted in significant greening initiative accomplishments to date

To date, the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust has secured title, or conservation easements, on seven properties as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust Securement Achievements

Property Name	Property Size	York Region Contribution	Value of Donation (land or easement)
Harper Land Bequest (King)	7ha	\$2,016	\$860,000
Calandra Conservation Easement Donation (W-S)	24ha	\$0*	\$525,000
Glassco Conservation Easement Donation (King)	111ha	\$15,000	\$770,000
Slokker Conservation Easement Donation (King)	69ha	\$0*	\$1,800,000
McLeod Land Donation to Town of Aurora (Aurora)	16ha	\$15,000	\$3,340,000
D Groomsbridge Conservation Easement Donation (King)	20ha	\$8,201	\$191,250
E&M Groomsbridge Conservation Easement Donation (King)	20ha	\$11,284	\$172,500
Totals	267ha	\$51,501	\$7,658,750

* For the Slokker and Calandra Properties, the Land Trust's significant contribution was the securement of the Conservation Easement and the Region's contribution was to contribute to / facilitate the ultimate public acquisition of the property.

As identified in Table 1, York Region has contributed a total of \$51,510 towards these properties which has made possible the protection of \$7,658,750 worth of land through donations of either title or a conservation easement in York Region. The Region has contributed another \$115,499 under this agreement which is being used to cover administrative costs associated with donations still under negotiation.

Staff recommend a one-year extension to the current agreement pending Region's completion of Natural Heritage Strategic Directions work

No changes to the Agreement are required to facilitate this one-year extension (January – December 2009). The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust is a not-for-profit land trust with limited staff. The intent of the Agreement is to provide the Land Trust with the seed money required to continue to negotiate donations of title and easements and leverage additional partnership funding. Accordingly, the Agreement does not stipulate specific annual deliverables, or deliverables over the term of the agreement. Rather, the land trust is required to provide annual reports on their achievements which staff convey to Regional Council in the annual Greening Strategy Achievement reports.

Staff recommends that the 2006-2008 agreement be extended for one year (January – December, 2009) with no changes.

The Natural Heritage Strategic Directions Report includes action items that warrant a comprehensive review of this agreement

The Natural Heritage Strategic Directions Report included two action items that are relevant to the Region's agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust:

Action 1: Update Our Natural Heritage System

Action 4: Restore and Strengthen the Natural Heritage System

The objective of these two action items is to ensure that a defensible natural heritage system is identified and mechanisms are in place to see it protected, restored and strengthened. Action 1 specifically references the need to secure the system, and to do so with strategic partnerships. The work being undertaken to advance these action items may identify the need to modify agreements that the Region has with our partners including the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Conservation Authorities, and others. Staff will report back to Regional Council with securement partnership and agreement recommendations resulting from the Natural Heritage Review Process.

In light of this pending work, staff recommends that the partnership agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust covering 2006-2008 be extended for a period of one year.

This agreement advances the objectives of the Region within the context of on-going natural heritage systems planning as articulated in Vision 2026

A continued partnership with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust is a strong component of the Greening Strategy and Greenlands Property Securement Strategy implementation which continues to support York Region's sustainable future through Vision 2026 and such key goal statements as:

"In 2026, York Region residents will continue to value and embrace the Region's unique natural heritage (land, air, water) and cultural heritage (sites and buildings important to our history, faiths and cultures).

In 2026, York Region will have grown at a pace that supports healthy communities, economic vitality, sustainable natural environment and effective human services."

These agreements, and the umbrella Greening and Securement Strategies, strengthen the Region's commitment to focus on Vision 2026 action areas including:

- Protecting sensitive features such as forests, watersheds, the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Simcoe.
- Promoting a permanent linked Greenlands system.

- Continuing to develop and build strategies for a green region, such as the York Regional Forest Management Plan, the Greening Strategy and the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy.
- Taking a leadership role in the development and implementation of environmental strategies and conservation activities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Land securement under the Greening Strategy is funded from a Securement Reserve which was established by Regional Council in 2001. As in previous years, the maximum annual contribution to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust of \$40,000 in support of this agreement extension will be funded, as required, from the Reserve.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in implementing the Greening and Securement Strategies. As members of the Region's Land Securement Working Group, local municipalities are kept up to date on the Region's securement initiatives and are invited to partner in key securement properties. As greenlands are protected and enhanced through securement initiatives, local municipalities reap the multiple benefits to both their communities and the natural environment. The Land Securement Working Group will continue to provide an open forum for local municipalities to work with the Region and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust.

7. CONCLUSION

This Greening Strategy partnership between York Region and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust results in greenlands being secured as well as outreach and public education programs which benefit all Regional residents. This agreement demonstrates York Region's environmental leadership and continuing commitment to protect and enhance the natural environment for future generations.

It is recommended that Regional Council approve a one-year extension to the 2006-2008 agreement with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, with the expectation that any future agreements will reflect the results of the Natural Heritage Review now underway and expected to be completed in the fall of 2009.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Jankowski, General Manager Roads at extension 5901.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.