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### **NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA ONE-YEAR AGREEMENT EXTENSION**

**The Transportation and Works Committee recommends that:**

- 1. The deputation by Mark Stabb, Central Ontario Program Manager, Nature Conservancy of Canada, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report, November 19, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services and the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:**

#### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize the extension of the 2006-2008 agreement with the Nature Conservancy of Canada ("NCC") for a period of one year.
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 agreement with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), 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 NCC 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 2001, the Region entered into their first agreement with the NCC, referred to as the Natural Greenlands Conservancy Joint Venture. After several years of successful implementation, the parties entered into a new revised three-year agreement for the period of 2006-2008. This partnership is the longest running municipal partnership that

NCC has across the country, and is seen as an innovative and progressive model by many jurisdictions. It helps the Region and NCC 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 the agreement we have with the NCC. These actions are being undertaken under the Natural Heritage Review expected to be completed by the fall of 2009.

While the NCC 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 a new more comprehensive one can be developed which specifies the terms of the extension.

#### **4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS**

##### **The Nature Conservancy of Canada agreement has resulted in significant greening initiative accomplishments to date**

Since 2001, the financial terms of the agreements between the NCC and York Region have not changed; they include an annual Regional contribution of \$100,000 from the Region and \$40,000 from the NCC. In return, NCC must deliver, and report on the land securement achievements (see Section 4).

NCC securement achievements since 2001 have met the terms of the agreements and are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
NCC Securement Achievements

| Property Name                                | Property Size | Property Value at Time of Securement |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Initial Agreement (2001-2005)</b>         |               |                                      |
| Izzard Property Donation (King)              | 9 ha          | \$318,000                            |
| Tasker Property CE Donation (King)           | 6 ha          | \$92,166                             |
| Tasker Property Purchase                     | 8 ha          | \$318,000                            |
| Barnett CE Donation (King)                   | 32 ha         | \$200,000                            |
| MacMillan Donation (Vaughan)                 | 48 ha         | >\$10,000,000*                       |
| Battilana-Spizzeri Purchase (King)           | 20 ha         | \$575,000                            |
| <b>Initial Agreement Totals</b>              | <b>123 ha</b> | <b>&gt;\$11,500,000*</b>             |
| <b>2006-2008 Agreement</b>                   |               |                                      |
| Peggy's Wood (Newmarket & East Gwillimbury)  | 17 ha         | \$1,100,000                          |
| Brozic Property to LSRCA (Georgina)          | 8 ha          | \$45,000                             |
| Creed Property (King)                        | 12 ha         | \$193,000                            |
| Collings Property (East Gwillimbury)         | 8 ha          | \$47,000                             |
| Fradkin Property (King)                      | 14 ha         | \$363,000                            |
| Roches Point CE Donations-Gibbons (Georgina) | 27 ha         | \$385,000                            |
| Roches Point CE Donations-Mathews (Georgina) | 55 ha         | \$910,000                            |
| <b>2006-2008 Agreement Totals</b>            | <b>141 ha</b> | <b>\$3,043,000</b>                   |

\*The MacMillan's wished to keep the precise value confidential

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

The NCC has requested that the agreement include minor changes to highlight the joint interest of NCC and the Region in the protection of Lake Simcoe and Lake Ontario, specifically the securement of land in the headwater areas. This reflects the federal and provincial interest supported by the release of the draft *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*. NCC has also requested that the agreement highlight their interest, building on and going beyond existing policy protection, in securing large woodlands such as the Happy Valley Forest/Pottageville Swamp complex and allowing old growth forest conditions to develop.

The NCC has also requested an increase in York Region funding through the agreement to \$120,000 annually (from \$100,000). Staff are recommending the extension with no changes to the current funding level of \$100,000.

Staff is recommending that the changes requested by the NCC be considered as part of the Natural Heritage Review discussed in the following section. At this time, it is proposed that the 2006-2008 agreement be extended for one year (January – December, 2009) with no changes other than an increase to the deliverables.

**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 NCC:

*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 NCC, the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, 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 is recommending that the partnership agreement with the NCC covering 2006-2008 be extended for a period of one year.

**The proposed one-year extension to the Agreement expands upon the specific deliverables for the three-year term**

Consistent with the 2006-2008 agreement with the NCC, the proposed agreement includes the annual contribution of \$100,000 from York Region and \$40,000 from the NCC, along with the deliverables.

Deliverables for the 2006-2008 agreement included properties to be secured by the NCC within York Region in accordance with one of the following deliverables for the three-year term:

- Six or more properties.
- Three or more properties cumulatively valued at a minimum of one million eight hundred thousand dollars (\$1,800,000).
- A combination of properties totalling over 180 hectares (~450 acres).

As noted in Table 1, the NCC met the agreement deliverables for the 2006-2008 term.

Additional deliverables required in the one-year extension (January – December, 2009) include:

- Two additional properties of any value and size.
- One additional property valued at a minimum of \$600,000.
- Any combination properties totalling over 60 hectares (~150 acres).

In addition, at least one joint annual publicity event promoting the partnership is required under the terms of the Agreement. The agreement achievements are reported to Regional Council in the annual Greening Strategy Achievements report.

**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 Nature Conservancy of Canada 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 \$100,000 in support of this agreement extension will be funded 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 benefit from 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 NCC.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The partnership between York Region and the Nature Conservancy of Canada results in greenlands being secured as well as outreach and public education programs benefitting 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 Nature Conservancy of Canada, 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.