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GREENLANDS PROPERTY SECUREMENT SLOKKER PROPERTY UPDATE TOWNSHIP OF KING

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, August 23, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works and the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize the contribution of \$250,000, in addition to the 2004 approved contribution of \$750,000 (total contribution \$1,000,000), towards the acquisition of the Slokker Property located in the northeast quadrant of the Community of Nobleton, Township of King, conditional upon the Region managing the tablelands (approximately 38 hectares/95 acres) as part of the York Regional Forest through an agreement with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.
2. Staff be directed to enter into a long term agreement (lease or equivalent) with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority facilitating the Region's management and operation of the Slokker property tablelands as part of the York Regional Forest.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Chief Administrative Officer of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Executive Director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and the Clerk of the Township of King.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to contribute an additional \$250,000 (total of \$1,000,000 when combined with \$750,000 contribution approved by Council in 2004) towards the partnership acquisition request by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT) for the Slokker property as part of the Regional Greening and Securement Strategies.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2001 Regional Council approved the Greening and Greenlands Property Securement Strategies with an annual commitment of \$1,400,000 for their implementation. In addition to the successful delivery of a number of Greening Strategy programs and projects

focusing on habitat protection and restoration, public education and promotion, information management and more, 235 hectares (580 acres) of land has been secured through donations, conservation easements, purchases and other opportunities.

The Slokker property is a parcel of land, approximately 69 hectares (170 acres), located on the Oak Ridges Moraine in northeast Nobleton in the Township of King (*Attachment 1*). The TRCA and the ORMLT were approached by a local community group in Nobleton and the Township of King to help secure this property. The TRCA and ORMLT have partnered on several land securement initiatives within their common areas of jurisdiction.

In the fall of 2003, staff of the TRCA and the ORMLT presented staff from the Region's Transportation and Works and Planning and Development Services Departments with the Slokker acquisition opportunity for funding consideration under the Greening and Securement Strategies. The TRCA and the ORMLT have negotiated a tentative purchase agreement on the property, subject to obtaining the required funding and necessary approvals.

In September 2004, Regional Council adopted the following recommendations in regard to this securement opportunity:

1. Regional Council authorize the contribution of the lesser of \$750,000, or 25% of the appraised value towards the acquisition of the Slokker Property located in the northeast quadrant of the Community of Nobleton, Township of King, as outlined in Option 4, Section 4 of this report; conditional upon:
 - The Region taking ownership of and managing the tablelands (approximately 95 acres); and,
 - The Province committing 50% of the funds (\$1,500,000) to the project in a timely fashion; and,
 - Successful fundraising by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT) for the balance of the purchase amount (\$750,000).
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Chief Administrative Officer of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Executive Director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and the Clerk of the Township of King.

Since Council's original position, there have been changes in the partnership funding commitment which have prompted revisiting Council's commitment.

This acquisition has been deemed a high priority by the Internal Evaluation Team (IET) for Securement Initiatives warranting an additional contribution of \$250,000, for a total of \$1,000,000 from York Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

At the time of Regional Council's original position on the Slokker Securement opportunity, it was estimated that the total acquisition costs, including legal fees, appraisal, environmental audit, GST, land transfer tax and stewardship funds, etc, would be \$3,000,000. This figure has since been reduced to \$2,850,000 with an additional contribution by Slokker Canada Inc. (reduced purchase price). The current budget and funding status is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Slokker Property Acquisition Budget and Funding Status

Securement Budget	Amount	Comments
Purchase Price	\$2,720,000	69 hectares (170 acres)
Associated Costs	\$100,000	Admin, Land Transfer Tax, etc.
Stewardship/Site Securement	\$30,000	Fencing, Signage, etc.
TOTAL	\$2,850,000	

Partnership Funding	Amount	Comments
York Region	\$750,000	Council Approval Sept. 24, 2004
Township of King	\$25,000	
Foundation of Greater Toronto	\$37,000	Sauriol Fund Raising Dinner
ORMLT	\$25,000	Sauriol Fund Raising Dinner
Private Donations	\$3,000	Foundation of Greater Toronto
Slokker Contribution	\$760,000	
City of Toronto	\$1,000,000	Source Water Protection Reserve
TOTAL	\$2,600,000	

Additional Funds Required	\$250,000	
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The total acquisition cost is below appraised value in light of the reduction in purchase price agreed to with the Slokker Canada contribution of \$760,000. The proposed acquisition of this property is timely as the community of Nobleton will be experiencing growth in the future in accordance with the Nobleton Community Plan. Establishment of these lands as a Regional Forest Tract before the community is entirely built out will facilitate the installation of infrastructure (fencing etc.) to control public access to the lands in the future.

In the event these lands are not purchased, they are not expected to come into public ownership through the planning process as a result of current permitted uses on the property and the expressed desires of Slokker Canada for alternate uses of the land. The entire 69 hectare (170 acre) Slokker property has been identified as Settlement Area

within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and is within the boundaries of the Nobleton Community Plan. Accordingly, future development of these lands is possible if not acquired for conservation purposes. Future development of the site could include residential development of the tablelands if servicing becomes available, or golf course uses including significant use and alteration of both the tablelands and valleylands. A golf course within the valley would have a significant impact on this major environmental linkage within the Humber River watershed.

The Internal Evaluation Team (IET) for securement opportunities have identified this acquisition opportunity as a strategic Greenlands initiative. Acquisition of the Slokker property is a high priority when assessed against the Region's securement criteria and priority matrix.

4.1 Funding Partners

The original funding scenario proposed included approaching the Province of Ontario for 50% of the acquisition costs, York Region contributing 25% and other partners generating the remaining 25%. Over the last two years, efforts by the TRCA to obtain provincial funding have not been successful. The City of Toronto has been confirmed as a significant new funding partner with \$1,000,000 being committed to the project from the Source Water Protection Reserve. As outlined in Table 1, all but \$250,000 of the required \$2,850,000 has been committed. The current recommendation to increase the Regional Contribution by \$250,000 for a total of \$1,000,000 would match the City of Toronto's contribution and confirm all the required funds to complete this acquisition in the 2006 budget year.

4.2 Land Ownership and Management

In 2004, York Region Council's commitment of \$750,000 was conditional upon the Region taking ownership of the approximately 95 acres of tableland (of the 170 acre property) in the interest of creating a new Regional Forest Tract within the West end of the Region. Staff continues to recommend that the Slokker Property, if secured in public ownership, be managed as a York Regional Forest Tract. Decisions of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and the City of Toronto have been based on the TRCA obtaining title of the entire 69 hectare (170 acre) parcel. The success of fundraising is contingent upon TRCA maintaining ownership. Staff is recommending that Council continue to pursue this opportunity to expand the Regional Forest into King Township, but that this be achieved through a long term agreement with the TRCA rather than through direct ownership of the lands. This agreement will protect the Region's interest in expanding the York Regional Forest into King Township. The TRCA is in agreement with this approach. The nature of this agreement will be established prior to the transfer of funds from the Region to the TRCA for acquisition of the Slokker property.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Region's Greening and Securement Strategies continue to support 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.”

The 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.

The acquisition and reforestation of this property also provides an opportunity to strive towards the Region’s Official Plan objective of increasing Regional forest cover to 25%.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In April 2001, Council approved the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy – A Legacy for our Future. This approval included the establishment of the Greenlands Property Securement Reserve with annual contributions of \$1,400,000 from 2003 on, phased in over 2001 and 2002. With the proposed additional contribution of \$250,000 (plus the 2004 approved \$750,000), the per acre cost to the Region is approximately \$5,880, for a total Regional contribution of \$1,000,000.

The Greenlands Property Securement Reserve currently contains approximately \$4,900,000. As such, there are sufficient funds in the reserve to participate in the Slokker Property acquisition at the new proposed funding level.

Management of the tableland by the Region will require initial capital costs for tree planting, trail development, fencing, signage, etc. These additional initial costs would be in the neighbourhood of \$200,000 but could be phased in over several years. Ongoing operational costs for the property would be approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year which would come from the approved Forestry Operations budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in the implementation of the Securement Strategy. As greenlands are protected and enhanced through securement initiatives, local municipalities benefit from the multiple enhancements to both their communities and the natural environment. The Corporation of the Township of King is fully supportive of the public acquisition of this property and has committed \$25,000 towards its acquisition.

This proposed expansion of the Regional Forest in the Township of King has the potential to increase forest cover, improve overall environmental health, provide easy access to a Regional Forest Tract for residents of the west and south-western portions of the Region and make programs such as Nature's Classroom available to a greater number of Regional residents in all nine local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The Internal Evaluation Team (IET) for Securement Initiatives has reviewed and assessed this opportunity for the acquisition of strategic Greenlands properties. Acquisition of the Slokker Property is a high priority when assessed against the Regional Securement Criteria. This acquisition also provides an opportunity to expand the York Regional Forest and increase forest cover. Staff recommends that the Region increase its 2004 contribution commitment of \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 and that this contribution be conditional upon the Region managing and operating the tablelands as York Regional Forest.

For more information on this report, contact Sandra Malcic, Regional Greening Coordinator of the Transportation and Works Department or Diane Pomeroy, Senior Planner of the Planning and Economic Development Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)