

REMARKS BY
NATURAL RESOURCES MINISTER LINDA JEFFERY
AT THE ONTARIO HEADWATERS INSTITUTE'S SYMPOSIUM on
INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

CHESTNUT RESIDENCE
89 CHESTNUT AVENUE
(Dundas and University)

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2010
8:45 a.m.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

- Thank you very much for inviting me to speak today.
- And thank you, also, to the Ontario Headwaters Institute for launching this event.
- The Ministry of Natural Resources is pleased to sponsor the symposium along with Conservation Ontario.
- As a co-sponsor, it's nice to see such a diverse list of participants ...

- ... policy makers, water managers, conservation authorities and NGOs, research foundations, universities and those interested in water management.
- This symposium builds on other events that have been important to the ongoing conversation about managing water in Ontario in the past year.
- Both Conservation Ontario and the Ontario Headwaters Institute have furthered the discussion.
- Most recently, the Institute hosted seven community workshops on preserving Ontario's headwaters.
- These are such valuable contributions.

- Our work today will provide another opportunity for water management leaders in the non-profit, business and government sectors to engage each other in creative, collaborative ways.
- These face-to-face conversations help point our way forward and increase our capacity to protect Ontario's biodiversity — its lakes and rivers, ground water, headwaters, watersheds and aquatic ecosystems.

Walkerton

- The challenges of managing our water properly are very real.
- In Ontario, hard and painful lessons have been learned when our water has not been managed properly or with required care.
- Many of us assembled here today remember the tragic events in Walkerton, ten years ago this month.
- This singular moment in Ontario, which resulted in at least 7 unnecessary deaths, serves as a reminder to all of us about the very real consequences that poor water management can have.
- While the Report of Walkerton Inquiry did not attribute the tragedy to watershed management, it does underscore the importance of sound water management and reminds all of us assembled here of the important work you do.

- Even today in Ontario, where the lessons of Walkerton have been learned, there are communities which exist daily with boil water advisories.
- In my time as Minister of Natural Resources, I've had the pleasure to visit some of these communities and water quality is always high on their list of concerns.

Challenges of Water Management

- It is essential that the province has a safe, sustainable supply of water today and in the future.
- There are some real challenges in managing our water resources and one of them is the perception that water is abundant.
- With 250,000 lakes and countless rivers and streams within our borders, as well as the Great Lakes that hold one fifth of the world's freshwater, Ontario is viewed as water-wealthy.
- This perception is misleading, because only a very small percentage of this water is replenished each year and is available for use.
- To quote from National Geographic: "All the water that will ever be is, **right now.**"

- Changes to the amount and timing of base-flow to streams, lakes and wetlands can affect water quality, quantity, and our aquatic biodiversity, as well as interfere with navigation and power generation.
- Water wealth is not unlike financial wealth — as we've seen recently, you can't simply assume that the good times will last forever so it's best to be prepared.
- As former Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy astutely noted: "Water has become a highly precious resource. There are some places where a barrel of water costs more than a barrel of oil."
- This is a reality of the world we are living in.

- We are living within a dynamic social and natural environment with many pressures and demands on water.
- Integrated watershed management is a tool that may be useful to address the complexity and uncertainty we are seeing.

Integrated Watershed Management

- Just three weeks ago, Conservation Ontario released a summary of its report, Integrated Watershed Management: Navigating Ontario's Future.
- My Ministry, with the Ministry of Environment and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans participated in the report.
- It's an update of our understanding of integrated watershed management.
- We know it requires information-sharing, science and a broader understanding of governance ...
- ... a model of governance that learns by doing, and that emphasizes flexibility and the interconnectedness of functions.

- So, a resilient and adaptive form of governance must be embedded in any framework for integrated watershed management.
- The report puts forward some considerations for next steps for collaboration.
- It cites some opportunities at the provincial and local levels for water management frameworks and the use of water budgets.
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- Further collaboration will need to take place in order to address gaps in data, resources, mapping and research.
- *(pause)*

Conservation Authorities

- Conservation authorities have an impressive record of achievement in managing water and other resources.
- They now have almost 65 years of practice at the watershed level, working with municipalities, stakeholder groups, and the Province.
- During my time as a City Councillor in Brampton, there were many occasions when our municipality worked closely with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Credit Valley Conservation Authority.
- Three years ago, my Ministry, along with representatives from the building industry, conservation authorities, other provincial ministries and environmental groups formed the Conservation Authority Liaison Committee, or CALC for short.

- CALC has helped the Province to develop new guidelines that clarify the roles and activities of conservation authorities around the municipal planning process.
- The final report will be posted in the near future.
- Also in the past year, my Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, created a team to discuss the legal and technical issues relating to drainage works.
- We have moved ahead and outlined some best management practices which will help to protect the integrity of watersheds.
- We will draft procedures and protocols with the consensus of all affected stakeholders.

- These actions rarely get noticed by the public, but they all make an important contribution to planning across the province.
- I remain committed to strengthening relationships between my ministry, conservation authorities and municipalities - and to improving the services and programs we provide to the citizens of Ontario.
- I'd be interested to hear ideas on how to better link the efforts of conservation authorities to my Ministry's mandate.

Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin

- I also want to acknowledge the importance of watershed management to larger agreements like the *Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin*.
- The current Agreement has just been extended for another year ending March 31, 2011.
- *COA* shows that multiple interests can actively support a vision, goals and strategies for Ontario's *Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem* and its tributary watersheds.
- The current *COA* agreement is the result of intense consultation with the people of Ontario, Aboriginal communities, and *Great Lakes* stakeholders.

- Over the past three years, my ministry engaged more than 220 partners on more than 150 COA-funded projects basin-wide.
- Without all these crucial players in the Great Lakes Basin, Ontario could not continue to advance the goals of the COA agreement.

The one-year extension allows Canada and Ontario to continue to protect and restore the Great Lakes while Canada and the U.S. negotiate amendments to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

- My Ministry will continue to protect the biodiversity of aquatic habitats, rehabilitate native fish and wildlife species, and reduce the impact of aquatic invasive species.

Biodiversity

- Water management in Ontario is also part and parcel of other provincial initiatives.
- Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy, our Climate Change Action Plan and the Endangered Species Act all incorporate water management.
- To meet the goals of these initiatives, land use planning and wetland planning must go hand in hand.
- As you probably know, the United Nations has designated this year the International Year of Biodiversity.
- To celebrate, my Ministry is working with the Royal Ontario Museum to offer a year-long program called "A Slice of Life".

- It's a series of workshops, podcasts, lectures and teaching tools to encourage people in Ontario to appreciate and protect the rich diversity of plant and animal life we have here.
- It's well worth a visit.
- Also, as part of my Ministry's partnership with the ROM, we'll help host the Urban Biodiversity Conference here in Toronto next Thursday, May 20 at the museum.
- Key discussions will focus on urban planning and the real value of nature.
- I am a member of Ontario's Biodiversity Council.
- Next Monday, the Council will release the province's first State of Biodiversity Report - a snapshot of the health of the province's biodiversity.
- On the same day, Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy Progress Report 2005-2010 will be released.

Conclusion

- The Ministry of Natural Resources helps to create an environment where integrated watershed management can take place.
- We also play an important role in setting water management direction and legislation.
- By providing funding, technical guidelines and science, we enable other organizations to undertake water management programs and projects.
- Once again, I'd like to thank the organizers for inviting me to speak this morning.
- On behalf of my Ministry, we look forward to continuing to work with you to protect and wisely use the precious water resources of our province, for now and for the future.
- Thank you.

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