



The Conservation Council of Ontario Strategic Directions and Business Plan

May 2003

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

Introduction

Who Are We?

The Conservation Council of Ontario (CCO) was founded in 1951 as a council of conservation-minded organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting cooperation on conservation issues. We currently have 22 provincial organizations as members and 50 individual members elected annually on the basis of the expertise and commitment to conservation.

- We have a fifty year history of working on environmental issues in Ontario
- We are provincial in scope
- Our membership covers environmental, professional and social organizations – a broad spectrum of support for conservation
- We have expertise in environmental planning, consensus development, policy research, demonstration projects, and community outreach

Ontario Needs Conservation

The more Ontario grows, the more it needs conservation. When the Conservation Council of Ontario was founded in 1951, Ontario had a population of 4.6 million people. There are now over 11 million people in Ontario living in 4.5 million homes. Each one of those people is a consumer. Our challenge is to make sure they are also conservers.

Conservation is an important part of the solution to many of the environmental problems we face today, including climate change, energy security, smog, urban sprawl, the loss of significant natural areas, garbage, hazardous waste and groundwater depletion.

Conservation can also play an important role in the development of an efficient and healthy economy, and in creating healthy communities.

In choosing between a conserver and a consumer society for Ontario, the choice should be clear.

What is Conservation?

Conservation is:

- a respect for nature
- the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources
- the minimization or prevention of waste and pollution

Conservation can be defined through specific actions, such as protecting natural areas and farmland, using less energy, recycling and the elimination of hazardous substances.

Conservation is also a social value, a statement of respect for the natural environment that should be integrated into all our actions, as individuals, as companies, and as a society.

The Conservation Council of Ontario gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, which receives annually \$100 million in government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative. The Foundation's support allowed us to conduct the background research and consultation with Ontario non-governmental organizations that lead to the development of this business plan.

Ontario needs a Conservation Council of Ontario

Much has changed in fifty years since the Conservation Council was founded. The number of organizations with an interest in conservation or environmental issues has grown astronomically and the nature of the issues and the challenge of finding environmental solutions are much more complex. This said, the need for leadership, cooperation and action on conservation has never been greater.

This business plan is the product of a year-long process to re-assess the role of the Conservation Council of Ontario within Ontario's diverse environmental movement. We have surveyed Ontario's NGOs about their needs and ability to contribute to developing environmental solutions. We brought together over 100 people for the first Eco Summit conference in November 2002. We have written a strategy for revitalizing the NGO sector's contributions to conservation and environmental solutions.

Both through our opinion polling and from the participants at the Eco Summit, we've heard a strong demand from Ontario organizations for proactive, conservation solutions and for a coalition to help promote conservation values and a conserver society. This business plan reflects the Conservation Council's commitment to fulfilling these needs:

We will remain focused on the goal of a conserver society for Ontario.

We will acknowledge and support the contributions and areas of expertise of other organizations in promoting conservation and environmental solutions.

We will help increase the capacity of organizations to address conservation and environmental priorities.

We will build partnerships and campaigns to address priority issues for conservation and a healthy environment.

We will raise public commitment to adopt conservation solutions and help connect individuals with support services and educational material.

In so doing, we will build a strong and long-lasting commitment to conservation in Ontario, as well as achieve tangible results in Ontario's communities and homes.

Our Mission

Our mission is to make Ontario a conserver society. The Conservation Council of Ontario seeks to promote conserver values and assist with the integration of these values into Ontario's society and economy.

Current Objectives

To achieve our mission, we have identified four immediate objectives for building the Conservation Council as the lead organization to coordinate a province-wide, cooperative strategy for conservation:

1. **Finding Partners for Conservation:** The challenge of a transition to a conserver society is far bigger than any one organization. If we are to succeed, we will enlist the support of organizations, businesses and governments in promoting conservation solutions. We will build the Conservation Council as a meeting place to share ideas and promote cooperation on conservation.
2. **Building Public Commitment:** At the heart of the transition to a conserver society is the public awareness and commitment to conservation. We will raise public awareness about the role of conservation in solving environmental problems and creating a healthy, sustainable future for Ontario. We will ensure that the conservation message reaches across the province and to all members of our society. We will promote conservation solutions and connect individuals with the organizations and support services that assist the public in adopting conservation practices.
3. **Addressing Conservation Priorities:** The Conservation Council will use a strategic approach to identifying and addressing conservation priorities. We will maintain an overview of environmental issues and the current activities in support of conservation. We will identify priority issues and/or needs. We will develop coordinated strategies to address those needs and develop partnerships, projects, and/or campaigns to execute the strategies.
4. **Developing Organization Capacity:** We need to build the Conservation Council's capacity to coordinate and manage a province-wide cooperative strategy for conservation. In particular, we will develop diverse and stable revenue sources that will allow us to maintain a core staff for research, project development, and administration. We will use our core funds and staff to raise additional project funds in support of cooperative partnership projects that address current conservation priorities and opportunities, and the needs of the conservation community.

Strategic Directions

Finding Partners for Conservation

1. **Membership**
We will seek to double our membership to at least 50 organizations and 100 individual conservation leaders by 2004. Organizations will be asked to join the Conservation Council in support of a provincial movement for conservation and to demonstrate conservation leadership in their own policies and activities. Members will be kept up to

date on the activities of the Conservation Council and its members. They will also receive discounted rates on Conservation Council activities.

- a. **Member Organizations:** We will conduct a membership drive among potential provincial non-governmental organizations.
- b. **Individual Members:** We will conduct an individual membership drive to enlist the support of leading activists and experts in the field of conservation.
- c. **Municipalities:** We will develop a new category of membership to facilitate the involvement of municipalities and communities across Ontario.
- d. **Agencies, Authorities, and Institutions:** We will develop a new category of membership for Crown agencies, conservation authorities and other institutions that have a commitment to promoting conservation in Ontario.
- e. **Public membership:** We will develop a public membership category supported by an e-mail newsletter service.

2. **Conservation Network**

Beyond the formal membership in the Conservation Council, we will also maintain a database of conservation leaders from other sectors and facilitate the dialogue and exchange of ideas through our conferences, workshops and campaigns.

- a. **Corporate conservation leaders:** we will identify and include in our contact lists the corporate conservation leaders in Ontario, including environmental contacts for the major companies and business associations in Ontario
- b. **Government liaison:** we will identify provincial and federal leaders with a mandate to support environmental health and conservation initiatives.

Building Public Awareness and Commitment

1. **Green Ontario Website**

We will maintain the Green Ontario website (www.greenontario.org) as a gateway site to environmental issues and conservation solutions in Ontario. The web site will also serve as our principal means of making our research and publications available to other organizations and the public.

2. **Conservation Outreach**

We will develop partnerships and cost-effective approaches to raising public awareness of conservation issues and solutions.

- a. **Connecting people to solutions:** We will identify a range of conservation solutions that can be adopted by the public and, via the Green Ontario website, help link the public with information and support services specific to Ontario.
- b. **NGO Outreach:** We will develop partnerships and membership outreach projects with organizations that have the potential to reach a significant audience through their membership, including cultural organizations, faith groups and professional associations.
- c. **Public outreach campaigns:** we will develop a general public awareness campaign and material in support of simple conservation solutions.
- d. **Opinion polls:** We will conduct regular opinion polls to gauge public awareness and opinions on conservation issues.
- e. **Targeted campaigns:** We will develop targeted public outreach campaigns to promote individual conservation actions such as ethical investments and energy conservation.

Addressing Conservation Priorities

1. Research

- a. **Conservation Progress Report:** We will produce a progress report on key indicators of conservation, including natural areas, farmland, energy, water, solid waste and hazardous waste.
- b. **Statements of Environmental Values:** We will continue our research into the provincial Statements of Environmental Values (SEVs) and their application in Ministry business plans and new initiatives. This research will lead up to an anticipated ten-year review of the SEVs in 2004.

2. The Green Ontario Strategy: NGO Capacity Building for Conservation

We will promote projects in support of implementing the Green Ontario capacity building strategy for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that was developed as a result of the 2002 Eco Summit.

- a. **Monitoring:** We will adapt the Green Ontario internet site to serve as an online guide to NGO resources and expertise. We will promote the role of NGOs as centres of excellence in conservation research, outreach and support services.
- b. **Planning Assistance:** We will seek to identify sources of professional planning assistance for groups involved in urban sprawl and development cases
- c. **French Services:** We will facilitate the translation of key documents into French and assist in the development of French and bilingual conservation services.
- d. **Cultural Outreach:** As mentioned above under Conservation Outreach, we will seek to develop public outreach projects in partnership with cultural associations
- e. **Community Action:** We will assist communities across Ontario to develop community action plans for conservation and the environment, building upon the volunteer resources within each community.

3. Conferences and Meetings

- a. **Eco Summit:** We will host an annual conference on environmental priorities and solutions.
- b. **Workshops:** we will host special workshops on current issues to stimulate dialogue and cooperation on developing and implementing conservation solutions.
- c. **Meetings:** we will hold an annual meeting of the Conservation Council and additional meetings of the membership as may be required to address current and emerging conservation issues.

4. Campaigns and Alliances

We will develop partnerships to address conservation priorities through the development of strategies, campaigns and projects to achieve common goals. Two immediate priorities are:

- a. **Farmland Preservation:** We will develop a multi-partner campaign to ensure that Ontario's prime agricultural resources are protected from urban sprawl, and work to promote compact, resource efficient, healthy urban centres.
- b. **Energy Conservation:** We will develop a multi-organization partnership to develop and deliver energy conservation outreach and support programs to the Ontario public.

5. External Advice

We will continue to provide a conservation perspective on advisory committees and boards such as the Niagara Escarpment Public Interest Advisory Committee, The Ontario Aggregates Resources Corporation, and the Minister's Mining Act Advisory Committee.

Developing Organization Capacity

1. A Diversified Funding Base

The Council will seek to develop a diverse funding base in support of conservation, including government, corporate, foundation and public donations. We will seek to establish an endowment fund to ensure that Ontario will always have a strong voice for conservation.

2. Core Services

We will maintain a streamlined and cost-effective operation, focusing on core services to the conservation community and the public

3. Partnerships and Movement-Wide Capacity

We will emphasize the role of strategic alliances and project partnerships in pursuing conservation priorities and opportunities. We recognize that the goal of a conserver society can only be achieved through widespread cooperation and that it is in our best interest to support the development of conservation capacity in other organizations.

Business Plan

There are three important steps to implementing our new strategic directions:

- Building support
- Developing core services
- Capitalizing on opportunities

Building Support

The first step is to enlist support for the overall plan from our members, other organizations, and major funding partners. This work will commence in May and continue through to our annual meeting in October.

Developing Core Services

The Council will continue to build on its core services to its membership and the conservation community. These services are:

1. The Green Ontario website and information service
2. The Eco Summit annual conference
3. Research and progress reports on conservation
4. Provide advice on conservation to external organizations

Addressing Conservation Needs and Opportunities

We have identified numerous areas of need with respect to promoting and supporting the transition to a conserver society in Ontario. The implementation of these strategic directions will, however, be dependent on our ability to raise funds and find partners for individual projects.

We will consult with Ontario's major funders to identify the areas of mutual interest and develop partnership proposals accordingly. We will also pursue the priority issues of farmland protection and energy conservation that were identified through our strategic planning process.

2002 / 2003 Priorities

(May to October 2003)

1. Building Support

- a. Secure the support of our existing membership for the Strategic Directions
 - i. Hold a membership meeting to review the strategic directions
 - ii. Approve a business plan for 2003/04 at the annual meeting in October

- b. Conduct a membership drive to enlist the support of Ontario NGOs
 - i. Establish a membership subcommittee of the Board with additional Council representation
 - ii. Approve new membership categories and a fee schedule
 - iii. Use our list of 200+ organizations developed for the Green Ontario survey
 - iv. Identify an additional 50 prominent individuals to be invited to join as individual members.
 - v. Conduct a mailing with the Strategic Directions paper, NGO strategy, and an invitation to become a member.
 - vi. Conduct follow-up calls with prospective new members and arrange meetings with members of the membership committee.
 - vii. Identify five to eight individuals to serve on the new Board of Directors and who would be able to help rebuild the Council.

- c. Secure initial funding commitments
 - i. Circulate membership invoices to current member organizations by June
 - ii. Arrange for online charitable donations via the Green Ontario website by June
 - iii. Conduct a donations appeal from members and subscribers to our newsletter service
 - iv. Conduct a general corporate appeal by June
 - v. Tailor and submit funding requests to major foundations for capacity-building grants or project funds
 - vi. Approach the federal and provincial governments for core support.
 - vii. Conduct an online appeal, featuring donated artwork from Bob Bateman and other gifts.

- d. Develop a longer-term fundraising strategy
 - i. Secure funding for the development of a long-term fundraising strategy.
 - ii. Hire a fundraising consultant to work with the Executive Director and the Board in identifying options for a diverse funding strategy for the Council.

2. Developing Core Services

- a. The Green Ontario Website and Information Service
 - i. Develop a checklist of conservation solutions for individuals, with links to support services and educational material provided by Ontario organizations (with particular emphasis on our members)
 - ii. Redesign our website to provide easy public access to this information
 - iii. Update all pages on the website

- b. Prepare a second Eco Summit meeting in November, with emphasis on conservation solutions, farmland preservation, and energy conservation
 - i. Establish a program committee
 - ii. Secure sponsors

- c. Adapt our research activities to focus on a conservation progress report
 - i. Identify major indicators for conservation
 - ii. Prepare a research report on trends and support programs for conservation for each of the indicators
 - d. Provide advice on conservation to external organizations
 - i. Maintain our representation on The Ontario Aggregates Resources Corporation, The Niagara Escarpment Commission's Public Interest Advisory Committee and the Minister's Mining Act Advisory Committee
 - ii. Maintain ongoing dialogue with the Ontario Smart Growth Secretariat
 - iii. Participate in other consultation exercises that arise in relation to conservation.
- 3. Addressing Conservation Needs and Opportunities**
- a. Initiate two issue campaigns to address conservation priorities, "Save Our Farmland" and "Save Some Energy"
 - i. Hold planning meetings with potential partners in June
 - ii. Identify common goals
 - iii. Identify resources within the partnerships
 - iv. Develop an action plan to achieve the common goals
- 4. Developing a Business Plan for 2003/2004**
- a. Prepare a business plan for the following year to be presented at the Annual Meeting in October. The business plan will reflect:
 - i. The degree of financial and organizational support for the Conservation Council and our goal of a conserver society.
 - ii. The opportunities that have been identified for partnership projects in support of the Green Ontario Strategy and the Conservation Council's strategic directions.
 - iii. The fundraising strategy and the realistic potential for growth of the Council in the upcoming year.