



Why do we invest in Green People?

Ontario has a rich and varied biodiversity

Ontario is rich in biodiversity with a bounty of plant and animal species, lakes and rivers, forests, grasslands and wetlands. Together, they ensure we have fresh air to breathe, food to eat, respite from stress, and access to recreation.

- With more than 250,000 lakes, 500,000 kilometres of streams, and large portions of the Great Lakes, Canada has one fifth of the world's freshwater.
- 98% of Ontarians live within the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin, and 80% get their drinking water from it.
- Ontario's forests cover 70 million hectares – more than half the province -- representing 18% of Canada's forests, and 2% of the world's forests.
- Ontario is home to more than 3,600 species of plants, 154 of fish, 50 of amphibians and reptiles, 483 of birds, and over 80 of mammals.

Ontario's natural environment is essential to our economic prosperity

The ecological goods and services the environment provides are a fundamental driver of our economy. From forestry to mining, from farming to tourism, commerce and the environment are complex allies. Our lives and livelihoods are dependent on a healthy environment. How we treat and engage with our natural surroundings will determine their fate -- and ours.

- In southern Ontario's Greenbelt alone, the economic benefits derived from ecosystem services -- natural processes, such as bees pollinating crops, trees producing oxygen, or wetlands absorbing carbon and cleaning water – are conservatively valued at \$2.6 billion a year, or \$3,487 per hectare.
- Clean air and water support the province's forest, farming, fishing, recreation and tourism industries, all of which are vital to Ontario's economy.
- Ontario is home to more than half of the best farm land in the country; its 51,950 farms generate almost one quarter of all farm revenues in Canada (\$22 billion in 2009), and the agricultural sector as a whole employs over 164,000 people.
- The forestry sector supports almost 200,000 jobs in 260 communities, and in 2008, its products were worth an estimated \$14 billion.
- Mineral production in Ontario was valued at more than \$10 billion in 2011; the province is among the top ten producers of nickel and platinum group metals in the world, and a significant producer of gold, copper, zinc, cobalt and silver.
- Southern Ontario produces non-metallic minerals (salt, gypsum, lime, sand, gravel, stone), and its sedimentary rocks are also the site of the province's oil and gas industry,

Ontario's natural environment is essential to our health and well being

A healthy environment does more than simply sustain human life in terms of shelter, food and water. Countless studies show that a close relationship with nature – even in urban areas -- is critical to maintaining and improving our physical and mental health.

- Outdoor environments encourage physical activity: greenery and the opportunity to get outside and explore nature inspires adults to be more active and therefore less overweight, and increases the amount of time children spend playing.
- Contact with trees and grass – a stroll in a park, or recess in a well-landscaped schoolyard -- can have powerful therapeutic effects, from improving memory and concentration skills, to decreasing anxiety, stress, anger, depression, and the incidence of attention disorders.
- Even a garden view through a window can reduce pain and recovery times in hospital patients, improve rehabilitation rates in nursing homes and prisons, and have a positive effect on job satisfaction and performance, with employees reporting fewer headaches and a greater sense of control.
- Trees and grass have also been linked to fewer property and/or violent crimes, a greater sense of safety, and stronger ties between neighbours.
- Air pollution currently costs Ontario almost \$4 billion each year in terms of lost productivity and healthcare costs, making clean air a key factor in reducing the load on health care systems.

But our environment is under threat...

More than 86% of Ontarians live in urban areas, increasingly cut off from our natural environment. As the population grows, so do the urbanized areas, with pollution, habitat loss, unsustainable resource use and climate change progressively degrading and even eliminating natural settings. This cannot continue.

- Since 2005, the number of people living and working in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region has grown by three million, resulting in a 45% increase in urbanized land (1070 square kilometres) and another nine million cars on the road.
- Between 1990 and 2004, an average of 50 million cubic meters of Ontario forest were lost per year, and more than 75% of southern Ontario's wetlands have been lost to draining, filling and other habitat alterations.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation in Ontario are significant threats to all of the 200 species already at risk; at the same time, over 1000 alien plant species have taken root, 441 of which are considered invasive.
- Between 2009 and 2011, Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions – a major cause of air pollution -- increased from 166 megatonnes to 171, with the single largest cause being transportation.
- In 2005, Ontarians' average ecological footprint – the amount of productive land and water needed to supply the resources consumed, and the resulting waste generated – was 8.5 global hectares (gha) per person; in comparison, the Canadian average is 7.1 gha, the British average is 6.3 gha, and the Argentinian average is 3.8 gha.

Taking Action: Green People

Our investment in Green People aims to bring us closer to our natural environment so that we can benefit from it and better understand its importance. Most importantly, this Action Area can catalyze the deliberate action required to change how we use our natural resources and to restore and conserve them for future generations.

On a per-person basis, Ontario places the fourth highest demand on the planet's resources in the world, exceeded only by the United Arab Emirates, the U.S. and Kuwait. If everyone lived

like Ontarians, four planets would be needed to sustain us. Quite simply, we are using more of the earth's biocapacity – the amount of land, waters and forests supplying resources – than is available. According to Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy, dramatically shrinking our individual and collective ecological footprint is a crucial first step.

That said, individual behaviours and consumption are just part of the solution. Partnerships across sectors are essential to achieve change on the scale required to tackle these challenges. Examples of this kind of partnership include:

- The Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Collaborative, a network of organizations working to protect biodiversity by connecting lands and people across this 93,000 sq. km. region through knowledge-sharing, stewardship planning, sustainable land use promotion, and public outreach and education
- The Cornerstone Standards Council, a collaborative of community, environmental and industry stakeholders that is developing a world-class certification program for the siting and operation of all pits and quarries in Ontario
- Forest Recovery Canada, a national tree planting initiative involving stewardship groups, tree planting agencies, forestry consultants, nurseries, First Nations, government and volunteer groups
- The Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative, which has brought together private conservation groups, conservation authorities, government agencies, municipalities and First Nations to create a common vision and coordinated activities for this 100,000 acre area at the eastern end of the Oak Ridges Moraine
- The Bobolink Roundtable Advisory Group, made up of representatives from agriculture, conservation, renewable energy, development, aggregates and First Nations, who provide advice to the provincial government that balances the protection of grassland birds with the needs of farmers and landowners

So what's our strategy?

We believe that by harnessing the knowledge and experience of our communities, we can make significant advances in restoring and protecting our biodiversity. We also believe that if everyone does their part to benefit the environment and we all do it together, we can realize the widespread and lasting change needed to reduce our impact.

Priority Outcome: More ecosystems are protected and restored

OTF seeks to fund initiatives that achieve the following results:

1. People participate in ecosystem conservation and restoration efforts

When it comes to maintaining healthy ecosystems, people are both part of the problem and key to the solution. Engaging Ontarians as environmental stewards is essential to a sustainable environment. This means mobilizing people to protect sensitive lands and ensure that their natural values are maintained over the long-term (conservation) as well as to bring degraded lands back to a natural functional state (restoration.) People are taking an active role in the stewardship of the environment. They are working towards creating a healthier and more sustainable environment.

Project or Grant Examples:

- Trained volunteer stewardship teams are established to safeguard and restore ecologically significant nature reserves and to enhance community engagement through events such as guided hikes and environmental clean-ups
- Two thousand student volunteers plant native trees and wildflowers, and remove invasive plant species to help restore a degraded pond ecosystem
- Local residents including newcomers gain valuable field experience and assist with habitat surveys, monitoring and data collection essential for the ongoing management of a fragile wetland ecosystem

2. Conservation and restoration efforts are better planned and more sustainable

Successful conservation and restoration efforts also depend on expert planning. Typically rooted in science and based on evidence, the long-term viability of these efforts depends on thoughtful research, methodical approaches and commitment over time. There is a track record of success to pull from as well as a pool of stakeholders with vested interests. Together they will lead to healthy natural habitats for today and tomorrow.

Project or Grant Examples:

- Through a collaboration with farmers and other stakeholders, an environmental assessment is conducted and a rehabilitation plan developed that integrates agricultural best practices into the restoration and stewardship of lands surrounding a degraded creek
- Municipal officials, conservation organizations and sector representatives work collaboratively to develop a comprehensive land securement strategy that complements the regional natural heritage system plan.

Priority Outcome: People reduce their impact on the environment

OTF seeks to fund initiatives that achieve the following results:

1. People connect with the environment and understand their impact on it

*With more than 86% of Ontarians now living in urban areas, we are increasingly cut off from our natural environment. When people are brought closer to the environment, they can both benefit from it and better appreciate the role they play in degrading **and** sustaining it. We must go beyond simple exposure, however, if we are truly to make a difference. Meaningful education and hands-on experiences with our natural environment allow us to appreciate its beauty, its importance to our world, and our place within it.*

Project or Grant Examples:

- A new community-led teaching farm provides opportunities for urban dwellers to connect with nature and gain access to fresh, affordable produce and the skills to grow and prepare it
- A new naturalized walking path and accompanying educational kiosk enable the community to explore the role of natural meadows in ecosystem health and enhance their understanding of environmental issues

2. People and resource users take deliberate action to benefit the environment

Education alone is not enough to tackle the environmental challenges we face. Ontarians rank among the top four global populations placing the greatest demand on the planet's

natural resources. To reduce these negative impacts, we must limit our ecological footprint by reducing emissions and pollutants, lowering our consumption of energy and water, reducing and better managing the waste we generate, and better maintaining our habitats. Tangible, measurable efforts by multiple stakeholders (individuals and sectors that use natural resources at scale) are required to better the environment and reduce our impact today.

Project or Grant Examples:

- Close to 50,000 student and adult volunteers plant 15,000 trees in an effort to reduce the effects of GHG emissions
- A successful local model for engaging businesses in measurable energy conservation initiatives extends its reach to ten new communities

3. Mechanisms are developed to promote responsible resource stewardship

Widespread change in behaviour can best come through system-wide solutions. Certificates, awards, standards, recognition systems and other tools have proven successful at triggering new, more sustainable practices among consumers and industry. By promoting, encouraging and empowering better practices on a large scale, we can build a culture of stewardship. Industries that create or adopt mechanisms for responsible resource stewardship can have a significant positive impact on the environment.

Project or Grant Examples:

- Stakeholders including community partners, local utilities and residents' associations, work collaboratively to revise and promote an innovative benchmarking tool for residents
- Representatives from community groups, environmental non-governmental organizations, First Nations and the aggregate industry come together to develop a voluntary set of best practices for socially and environmentally responsible aggregate extraction in Ontario

“No single government, conservation organization or sector can deliver the scale of change required but, together, we can build upon the progress made and renew our commitment to conserving our wealth – our biodiversity. Protecting the diversity of life on Earth – of which humans are an integral part – requires broad societal consensus and participation. It is a challenge for not some of us, but for all of us.” -- [Ontario Biodiversity Strategy 2011, Ontario Biodiversity Council](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What do you mean by people connecting with the environment?

Providing rewarding, enriching learning experiences that help participants understand their role and relationship with the environment.

2. What are mechanisms?

Mechanisms includes the establishment/use of certificates, voluntary initiatives, standards and practices, incentives, recognition systems and other such tools which can be used to encourage and empower better practices and environmental stewardship. Mechanisms enable change across scale.

3. What do you mean by deliberate action?

This speaks to efforts that result in a tangible change – projects that move beyond education/awareness to result in concrete action that reduces our impact on, and increases benefits to, the environment.

4. What is meant by better planned?

Conservation and/or restoration work that is guided by an evidence-based plan or approach, often rooted in science. Such plans may be very local or specific, or could be part of more complex, broad-based systems plans. In either case, there will likely be engagement and buy-in from multiple stakeholders.

5. What is meant by more sustainable?

This means that there is a sound plan or evidence that results will be maintained over the long term. There are many best practices in place to ensure the sustainability of the environment.

6. Who are resource users?

Resource users include a range of sectors, such as aquaculture, agriculture, forestry, industry, and business that use natural resources at scale and have an impact on the environment.

7. What is the difference between conservation and restoration?

Conservation encompasses two components: bringing land into a conserved (protected) state; and undertaking stewardship actions to ensure its natural values are maintained over the long-term. Restoration involves bringing degraded lands back to a natural, functional state. Rarely will OTF fund restoration work if the lands being restored will not be conserved over the longer-term.

8. Will OTF fund business and industry directly?

OTF eligibility for funding has not changed. An applicant must be an eligible grantee in order to apply. However we will fund proposals that empower approaches for business, industry and other resource sectors to reduce their impact or benefit the environment.

9. Will OTF fund industry associations?

OTF grantee eligibility has not changed. Non-profit organizations are eligible. If an industry association is a non-profit, it may apply for support but the initiative must directly align with grant results and demonstrate a strong community impact/benefit beyond just its own membership.

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