

WATERSCAPE III: RESILIENT LANDSCAPES AND HEALTHY WATER IN SOUTH-CENTRAL ONTARIO

WEBINAR BACKGROUND

Spring 2020



This slide deck is offered in order to:

- **Provide background material to webinar participants;**
- **Reduce webinar presentation time and complexity; and,**
- **Replicate in a compact format the 22 priority actions from the Discussion Document.**

This will allow us to focus during the webinar on suggestions for resilient landscapes and healthy water rather than spend time cataloguing the perceived short-comings of recent Provincial amendments to environmental protections.



Part I:

A SHORT BACKGROUNDER ON WATERSCAPE

- **WaterScape III is based on two previous WaterScape projects and seeks to develop a renewed policy framework and priority actions to ensure resilient landscapes and healthy water in South-central Ontario.**



WATERSCAPE I

- **WaterScape I held six community meetings in February 2018 on a provincial consultation on Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring.**
- **The meetings were staged with 2 provincial partners – the Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Ontario Environment Network – and 13 local partners, welcoming more than 150 participants.**
- **Meeting outcomes included both a proceedings document and a series of recommendations sent to the Province, co-signed by 144 groups or individuals.**
- **The proceedings and recommendations can be seen at www.ontarioheadwaters.ca/waterscape.**



WATERSCAPE II

- **In July, 2019, WaterScape II conducted a 26-question survey on sustainable planning, which received 128 responses (32%) from 400 invitations.**
- **Publicity partners included the Ontario Environment Network, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, the Great Lakes Protection Act Alliance, and numerous other organizations**
- **The survey report, called High Consensus, Deep Concerns, distilled community support on the need to retain sound environmental protection for lands and water, as well as deep concerns about government actions to both reduce environmental protection and limit public consultation.**



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM WATERSCAPE I AND II

- **There large gaps between how the environmental stewardship community and the Ontario Government view environmental protection and sustainable planning;**
- **The current government has significantly reduced meaningful public consultation on key issues; and,**
- **There is a real need to re-vitalize Ontario's policy framework on resilient landscapes and healthy waters, especially in the light of recent cuts to existing environmental protection.**



ADDRESSING THE GAPS

WaterScape III seeks to address the gaps by:

- Issuing a Discussion Document containing background information, a description of current challenges, and both a Recommended Policy Framework and Suggested Priority Actions;**
- Soliciting comments through its website, social media, presentations, and discussion with key organizations;**
- Distilling comments into a second draft and asking for further comments; and,**
- Releasing a final framework that organizations and the public will have an opportunity to endorse.**



HOW WILL WATERSCAPE III BE DELIVERED?

- **WaterScape III will be delivered through the OHI's Civic Engagement portfolio, which requires a collaborative process in partnership with other organizations.**
- **The project will have both publicity and event partners. In addition, we will approach numerous stakeholders to provide their valuable perspective on key sectoral issues.**



TIMELINE*

- **February – May**
 - **Launch website and Discussion Document**
 - **Seek comments on digital media and presentations**
- **June – August**
 - **Incorporate all comments into a second draft**
 - **Issue Draft II and seek final comments**
- **September – December**
 - **Issue final Policy Framework**
 - **Solicit public sign-on**

***May be impacted by events beyond our control.**



Part II:

**ONTARIO'S REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS
FOR LAND USE PLANNING AND
PROTECTING WATER**



HISTORY

1800 - 1933: Excessive tree cutting and development led to water pollution and tainted water supply, with much of South-central Ontario bereft of trees and subject to soil erosion, stream erosion, and flooding.

1934: Ontario creates the Grand River Conservation Commission -- the first watershed management agency in Canada.

1941: Guelph Conference on Conservation

1946: Ontario passes the Conservation Authorities Act – 1st jurisdiction in Canada to embrace watershed management

1973: Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act – 1st of its kind in Canada



CORE LAND USE PLANNING INITIATIVES

- **Planning Act**
- **Niagara Escarpment Protection and Development Act, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Greenbelt, Lake Simcoe Protection Act, Aggregate Resources Act; Species at Risk Act; etc**
- **The Provincial Policy Statement – eg: 2.2.1 Planning authorities shall protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by:
a. using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated and long-term planning ...”.**
- **Natural Heritage Reference Manual, Ontario Biodiversity Strategy, Natural Heritage System Planning**



CORE WATER PROTECTION INITIATIVES

- **Ontario Water Resources Act**
- **Environmental Protection Act**
- **Conservation Authorities Act, including Section 28**
- **Wetland Protection**
- **Clean Water Act – Source Protection**
- **Low Water Response Plan**
- **Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement – Ecosystem Approach**
- **Canada-Ontario Agreement – Priority Watersheds**
- **Great Lakes Protection Act – Geographically Focused Initiatives**



PERCEIVED CURRENT PROVINCIAL DIRECTION

- **The Province sees much of the environmental regulatory regime as red tape and costly for business**
- **Rather than tweak the tensions between environmental protection and development, the Province appears to welcome business input far more than those with ecological concerns**
- **The Province sees urban fringe and suburban development as an economic driver and, other than mass transit, has not demonstrated much interest in sustainable planning, sustainable buildings, and complete communities.**



RECENT PROVINCIAL ACTIONS

- **Bill 66 - Open for Business Bylaws**
- **Aggregate Summit – few community groups**
- **Species at Risk – Pay to Slay**
- **Cuts to Fifty Million Trees, Ontario Biodiversity Council, etc**
- **Housing Action Plan**
- **Review of PPS – yes to septic systems and development on “low risk land”; no indicators to gauge success**
- **Amended mandate for conservation authorities – revokes roles for the conservation of lands and watershed management**
- **Review of Flooding: very few words on prevention**
- **Great Lakes / Inland Waters / Wetlands / Source Protection / Low Water Response etc ??**



A POSSIBLE CASCADE OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

- **Natural resource protections are reduced while the conservation of land and watershed management are removed from CA mandate and not replicated elsewhere;**
- **The Housing Action Plan eats in to natural heritage, agricultural lands, and possibly into existing greenspace while being unable to deliver either cheaper housing or complete communities**
- **Ontario misses an opportunity to pursue sustainable development, sustainable buildings, and energy conservation**



**Rather than watch these potentially
negative outcomes unfurl,
Waterscape III seeks to identify ways
to protect resilient landscapes and
healthy water in South-central Ontario**



The pages following the second-next slide are provided for reference and replicate, in a compact format, the 2 recommended policy frameworks and the 22 suggested priority actions from the discussion document.



OPTIONS IN THE WEBINARS INCLUDE:

- **Discuss / add to the 2 recommended policy frameworks or the suggested 22 priority actions as follow the next slide;**
- **Address geographic or sectoral issues; and/or,**
- **Have a more strategic discussion.**

THANKS - SEE YOU AT THE WEBINAR



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RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

Recommended Policy Framework



Entrepreneurial and publicly-funded development in Ontario should aspire to sustainable land use planning and management in order to provide for resilient landscapes across South-central Ontario. A sustainability lens for land use planning should be based on watershed and sub-watershed health; complete communities with sustainable buildings and green infrastructure; and ensure a level playing field for public engagement and legal recourse.

RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

Proposed Priority Actions



Natural Heritage

- L1 Provincial guideline similar to “How Much Habitat is Enough”....
- L2 Strengthen requirements implement section 2.1 of the PPS
- L3 Ensure provision of cumulative reporting mentioned in PPS
- L4 Ensure timely public review
- L5 Implement Ontario Biodiversity Strategy
- L6 Continue forest indicator in watershed report cards
- L7 Require NHS planning in municipal official plans
- L8 identify mechanisms to expand or create new Greenbelt

RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

Proposed Priority Actions



Aggregates and Agriculture

L9 Develop a more balanced approach to aggregates

L10 Establish stronger programs to protect agriculture and encourage farm succession

L11 Encourage a transition to sustainable agriculture

RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

Proposed Priority Actions



Municipal Planning

L12 Create guidance document on sustainable communities and sustainable buildings

L13 Embrace green infrastructure in land use planning

Public Engagement

L14 Develop educational material about the inter-connections between natural systems, the economy, and social well-being

PROTECTING WATER

Recommended Policy Framework



Ontario should perform a comprehensive review of and integrate all aspects of its water protection and management framework in order to ensure protection for both biodiversity and human needs for drinking water, irrigation, and other uses in a changing climate. This should include both protection and conservation measures and include the Great Lakes, other surface waters, groundwater, and wetlands.

PROTECTING WATER

Proposed Priority Actions



W1 Ontario should develop a comprehensive framework to address all aspects of its water protection and management regime including:

- a. Designate a lead ministry to co-ordinate all aspects of water and aquatic species across the province;**
- b. Support integrated watershed management, cumulative monitoring, and adaptive management; and,**
- c. Provide a road map on the roles of different ministries**

PROTECTING WATER

Proposed Priority Actions



- W2 Harmonize all definitions and regulations**
- W3 Establish thresholds for action under the PWQM Objectives**
- W4 Retain role of CAs in land conservation and watershed management**
- W5 Identify on-going role for Source Protection Committees:
The OHI suggests they evolve into Regional Water Boards**
- W6 Abolish the Great Lakes Guardian Council**
- W7 Incorporate private reporting data into provincial databases**
- W8 Establish educational and engagement programs on the value of water, water stewardship, and water conse**