

## **A Municipal Charter for Watershed Security in Ontario**

As Ontario municipalities deliver core services that impact the health of our waters, including those related to land use planning, drinking water, storm water, and sanitary sewage, and as Ontario's population and development pressures grow at a time when the climate and biodiversity crises require strategic direction, it is more important than ever that municipalities integrate land use and watershed planning.

A constructive step along this path would be for municipalities to develop a Charter for Watershed Security - the protection of our aquatic resources to safeguard regional ecological integrity, social wellbeing, and economic vitality.

**Indeed, such a Charter might be the best way to ensure that municipalities meet their obligations under the Provincial Planning Statement to use the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for planning as well as to protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water.**

The Charter could have the following elements:

- A commitment to integrate land use and watershed planning;
- Embracing a whole watershed approach to ensure that normal flows of clean water enter the municipality from upstream communities, as well as to assure the same for communities downstream;
- Undertaking a water resource inventory as well as an ecological land classification study and using the information to create both a natural heritage system strategy and a biodiversity strategy to identify and protect key ecological features and functions for local watershed health.
- Early direction to key municipal departments, such as economic development, permitting, transportation, and works, to integrate their land use planning responsibilities with watershed planning, including consideration of the impacts of climate change on local watersheds;
- Establishing watershed and/or sub-watershed targets, including restoration targets where necessary, for areas in natural heritage, wetlands, streamside vegetation, and urban canopies and greenspace;
- Ensuring before and after terrestrial and aquatic monitoring of the immediate impacts of specific development, including infrastructure, as described by a municipal protocol;
- Performing cumulative monitoring on a regular basis and implementing adaptive management to redress unacceptable conditions, and,
- Encouraging sound stewardship practices for all land in the municipality.

Comments and suggestions on this draft Charter are welcome through the end of October.

**Promoting Watershed Security in Ontario**

[www.ontarioheadwaters.ca](http://www.ontarioheadwaters.ca) ♦ 416 231 9484 ♦ [andrew@ontarioheadwaters.ca](mailto:andrew@ontarioheadwaters.ca)