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PREMIER MCGUINITY CELEBRATES EARTH DAY WITH TREE PLANTING
Government Supports 1.8 Million New Trees In Greenbelt To Fight Climate Change, Help Green Communities

MARKHAM — The Ontario government is helping Ontarians create a healthier environment, fight climate change and improve their communities by providing funding to plant 1.8 million trees in the Greenbelt, Premier Dalton McGuinty said today.

“Earth Day is a great opportunity to celebrate Ontario’s natural beauty and a quality of life that is second to none — and it’s up to all of us to work together to protect and enhance our environment,” said Premier McGuinty. “By increasing the number of trees planted, we will reduce the impacts of climate change, help control erosion and flooding, improve air and water quality and provide a better quality of life for all Ontarians.”

The government has provided \$2 million to the Trees Ontario Foundation. The foundation intends to plant 1.8 million trees on the Greenbelt by 2010.

“Planting trees restores and enhances wildlife habitat and plays an essential role in conserving biodiversity in Ontario for the benefit of future generations,” said Natural Resources Minister David Ramsay. “The Trees Ontario Foundation has the forestry experience and expertise to coordinate the planting of large numbers of trees across the province.”

“This is an important initiative in our government’s comprehensive strategy on climate change, and our ongoing commitment to ensure a cleaner, greener, more sustainable Ontario for ourselves and for our children,” said Environment Minister Laurel Broten.

“This funding comes at a particularly crucial time. It now gives us sustained annual funding which allows us to work closely with our partners in coordinating tree planting across the province. The funding will now make it possible to plan for a significant increase in annual planting levels, particularly in areas of need,” said John Cary, Chair of the Trees Ontario Foundation.

To plan and coordinate tree planting, the Trees Ontario Foundation will work with the Ministry of Natural Resources, the province's conservation authorities, the community-based stewardship councils of the Ontario Stewardship program, and private tree planters. The Greenbelt Foundation will also work with the Trees Ontario Foundation to plan and coordinate tree planting on the Greenbelt.

Investing in tree planting is just one way the McGuinty government is promoting a healthier natural environment and acting to mitigate the effects of climate change. Other initiatives include:

- Launching Ontario's first biodiversity strategy to protect the province's plants and wildlife and the habitats that support them
- Protecting 1.8 million acres of greenspace in the Greenbelt, providing a safe habitat for 66 species at risk
- Closing the single largest source of air pollution in the Greater Toronto Area — the Lakeview Generating Station,
- Working with an alliance of organizations through the Natural Spaces program to develop the tools, incentives and on-the-ground activities that will encourage and support private landowners in conserving natural areas on their land.

"We have an obligation to future generations to pass on a natural environment that is healthy and communities that are strong," said Premier McGuinty.

"Planting trees is a solid investment that will provide our children with beautiful spaces to enjoy and cleaner air to breathe for many years to come."

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