

Conservation in Ontario is Accelerating



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The Ontario Conservation Accelerator (OCA)

- A team of professionals with deep conservation sector experience and ambition, enabled through mutual respect, good humour, and significant resources
- Partners with governments, land trusts, and Indigenous communities
- Advisors and managers of conservation funding from leading philanthropic foundations and individuals
- A 'conservation start-up' with a partner-first approach and a focus on results
- Building on the 2020 Protected Areas Working Group identified 3 gaps: build sector capacity/ seed funding/ 'SWAT' team





Being Relentlessly Useful

1. Funding and capacity building for the land trust sector
 - a. Funding and fundraising support (coaching, gifts); loans; land securement support; EcoGift support, organizational development; mapping, loan fund and more!
2. Provincial parks expansions – formal partner of Ontario government
3. Urban Parks Working Group – OCA was chair and secretariat
4. Intentionally filling gaps in land trust coverage – acting as a land trust so great opportunities are not missed (in the trenches)
5. Leading large-scale provincewide efforts – e.g., Scouts Canada divestment
6. Supporting Indigenous-led conservation
7. Advisory role for several major foundations and individual donors
8. Piloting innovative conservation tools and approaches



Conservation is Accelerating

- Multiple crises driving this work: biodiversity, climate change, and access to nature and open spaces, particularly close to where people live
- A huge opportunity is unfolding right now through the baby boom generational transfer of wealth **and** land, perhaps the “largest in history”
- Of the 40+ land trusts ~50% are volunteer only (changing)
- Multiple local land trusts have double their impact or led their first acquisition, or successful completed projects more than 200% larger than any in their history. (TIWLT, CC, LPBLT) or their first acquisition (NILT, HHLT)
- There has been incredible growth in the conservation sector but the volume of opportunities, land donations etc. has surpassed the capacity of many land trusts.



Trends

- Explosion of use of parks and conservation areas during the pandemic (16M people in Ontario and Over 12 million visitors to Ontario Parks in 2024)
- Access to nature is increasingly becoming a priority for both private and public funders
- Government grants are changing (still never fund endowments)
- As the cost of land increases the need to raise significant stewardship endowments becomes a larger focus that requires more active fundraising.
- Many land trusts are hiring their first staff or staffing up. (5 ED posting in the spring!) But there isn't a pipeline of experienced, conservation-focus ED candidates.
- More collaboration is needed and we need to role up our impact beyond individual land trusts. More. Better. Faster. Evolution of groups like CLC, OCA, OLTA, ACLT



OUR Results (rolled up collaborations)

- Completed / helped complete 50 projects, protecting more than 38,000 acres (a combination of OCA- and partner-led projects)
- Raised millions in new funding for conservation (\$20M+ in new and multi-year funding)
- Helped facilitate the addition of tens of thousands of acres of Crown land to parks and conservation reserves
- Several large projects are underway with government, including \$11M project tied to the proposed Windsor Urban National Park.
- A pipeline of ~135 projects – a combination of OCA-led and partner-led projects (including LBHF!)





Amazing Conservation Successes at LBHF!

- LBHF is an ideal partner!
- The right organization, doing it for the right reasons, in the right area at the right time
- Commitment of a 20% Stewardship Endowment Fund! (OCA & NCC both put 20% of the land value into SEF)
- Moving from volunteer-only to paid staff is a critical next step to capitalize on the opportunities you have.
- We are exciting about future projects!

Delighted to share a
challenge match of
\$25,000 today to help
accelerate the amazing
work of LBHF!



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