



NEXT STEPS

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Despite the many changes that have taken place in the last 200 years, the Region still contains a wealth of natural resources. These include its soils, aggregates and landforms, its rivers, wetlands, lakes and groundwater, its forests, wildlife, aquatic communities and its air. This report has tried to describe these resources and the many values that they provide. They are a rich legacy, one that should be celebrated, cherished and protected for future generations.

The stresses on our natural resources come from hundreds of different sources: the tailpipes of our cars, the solvents we pour down the sink, the housing development beside the wetland, the stormwater that flows from our city streets. Where possible, this report has quantified these stresses and their impacts. This will help to prioritize where action should be taken.

The condition of the Region's natural resources varies widely. While the lakes in the Region (and Lake Ontario) are in relatively poor health, the drinking water that comes from those sources is of very good quality. Some headwater streams, such as parts of the Black and Rouge Rivers, are cold and clean enough to support sensitive fish species such as brook trout. On the other hand, the lower Holland River is in a severely degraded condition. Levels of sulphur dioxide and lead are not a problem in the Region's air, but the levels of ground level ozone are often high enough to exacerbate respiratory problems. This range of quality emphasizes the need for action on two fronts - the need to protect what is healthy, as well as restore what is degraded.

What are the next steps after the release of this report? It will be widely distributed, and we hope widely read and discussed. Its recommendations will be considered at Regional Council. After that, it is our hope that action will begin: gathering information on benchmarks, developing programs to address key issues, educating and involving residents throughout the Region. This Report will need updating at regular intervals so that we can assess what progress we are making towards the goal of a sustainable natural environment.