MINISTER'S EXPLANATORY NOTE TO ACCOMPANY DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNING

DIVISION: Policy
BRANCH: Natural Resources Conservation Branch
SECTION: Natural Heritage Section
RIDING: All ridings in the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area

SIGNIFICANT DATES: The Agencies and Appointments Directive (AAD, February 2015) directs that the Agency must submit its annual report to the Minister within 90 days of the agency's fiscal year - NEC Annual report was received by the Ministry on June 15, 2015.

ISSUE: APPROVAL OF THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT COMMISSION 2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

SOURCE OF LEGAL AUTHORITY TO SIGN:
The requirement for the Minister to approve the Annual Report is provided in Management Board of Cabinet's Agencies and Appointments Directive ("AAD") effective February 2015. The AAD carries the authority of delegated legislation under the Management Board of Cabinet Act, 1990 (s. 3(3)). There is also a requirement for the Minister to approve the NEC annual report under the Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") between the Minister of Natural Resources and the Niagara Escarpment Commission ("NEC").

BACKGROUND:
• The AAD requires that:
  o All agencies without governing boards (i.e. the Niagara Escarpment Commission), except advisory agencies, must submit an annual report to the responsible Minister within 90 days of its fiscal year end; and that
  o There is no longer a requirement in the new AAD that the Niagara Escarpment Annual Report be tabled in the Legislature.
  o Once approved by the Minister, there is a requirement that annual reports be posted on the responsible ministry's website or on the provincial agency website.
  o The NEC Annual Reports will be posted on the NEC's website once approved.
• The 2014-2015 Annual Report was received by the Ministry on June 15, 2015.
• Program staff have reviewed the NEC 2014-2015 Annual Report and have found that it meets the requirements set out in the AAD and the MOU.
HIGHLIGHTS

- 25th Anniversary of the Niagara Escarpment’s United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Biosphere designation. In September 2014, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO confirmed that the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve (NEBR) continues to meet the criteria of a World Biosphere Reserve.
- The Inspections, Investigations and Enforcement Protocol between MNRF and NEC was updated to ensure effective and efficient administering of the compliance program.
- New development permit applications received: 444
- Active Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendments: 21
- Coordinated Plan Review: NEC staff has continued to work on the 17 NEP review topics that were approved by the NEC in 2012 and have added four additional policy topics this past year, including cemeteries, cultural heritage resources, woodlands and species at risk.

BUDGET
(detailed category descriptions on page 24 of the Annual Report)

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<td>Salary and Wages</td>
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<td>Employee Benefits</td>
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Additional staffing has been required to undertake the research, consultation and analysis in preparation for the coordinated plan review. These resources are temporary until the outcome of the review is realized.

RECOMMENDATION


Rationale:
- The Minister will fulfill the requirements of the AAD and MOU by approving the NEC Annual Report.
Note re: Communications

- CSB has previously confirmed there is no requirement to include a communications plan in the briefing notes for the NEC annual reports.

Contacts:
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Niagara Escarpment Program Team Leader  Communications Coordinator
Natural Resources Conservation Branch  Communications Services Branch
705-755-1820  416-314-2101
EXPLANATORY NOTE TO ACCOMPANY DOCUMENTS FOR MINISTER'S SIGNING


BRANCH CONTACT: Robert Pineo
Niagara Escarpment Program Team Leader
Natural Resources Conservation Branch
705-755-1820

ATTACHMENTS:

APPROVED BY: Approved, June 25, 2015
Ala Boyd
Manager
Natural Heritage Section

Approved June 25, 2015
Jason Travers
Director
Natural Resources Conservation Branch

Approved June 26, 2015
Rosalyn Lawrence
Assistant Deputy Minister
Policy Division

Bill Thornton
Deputy Minister
MINISTER’S APPROVAL PAGE


RECOMMENDATION:
The Minister approve the 2014-2015 Niagara Escarpment Commission Annual Report and table it in the Legislative Assembly.

MINISTER’S DECISION:

I approve the recommended course of action.

The Honourable Bill Mauro
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry

Date: Oct 5 2015