



# Our environment

Protecting it for today  
preserving it for tomorrow





We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors;  
we borrow it from our children.

Ancient Indian Proverb

Our time on this earth is short...yet the effect of our actions and decisions will be experienced by the generations born decades and centuries from now. How will the 21st century be regarded by future generations? What legacy will we leave for our children and grandchildren?

According to broadcaster and scientist David Suzuki, we are all part of a way of life that is unsustainable because it is undermining the life support systems of the planet – air, water, soil, energy and biodiversity.

There are many organizations in Perth County working to counteract the ills of the past and present and restore our natural environment as a fitting legacy to pass on to generations to come. They are working towards a gentler, more sustainable relationship with nature through causes like wetland preservation, green energy alternatives, and transportation options. Acting now to ensure future environmental sustainability is essential and is everyone's responsibility. Meeting our needs as human beings while not altering the ecosystem structures and functions that provide life-supporting resources is a challenge. But not insurmountable!

Community Foundation of Canada (CFC) – the umbrella organizations for more than 160 community foundations across Canada - has heard the call to action

and has accepted the challenge. Through a partnership with the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation they have dramatically changed the face of environmental granting in Canada. By supplying financial support and expertise to community foundations across Canada this collaboration has resulted in increased local environmental action. The Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation is one of 21 community foundations involved in this program. In 2007, collectively more than \$5 million in permanent environmental endowment funds had been raised and at least \$2.6 million in grants to environmental organizations provided in their communities.





### Protecting Our Environment Together (POET)

In 2006 the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation initiated **Protecting Our Environment Together (POET)**, a program to expand Perth County's capacity to carry out environmental programming. It is a seven-year initiative to strengthen and increase participation by citizens, local government, environmental organizations and businesses in creating a sustainable future. The three components of this program are Community Leadership, Fund Development, and Granting.

### Community Leadership

The initiative began by designating a board position to environmental expertise and forming the Environment Advisory Committee. Local environmental and public organizations were convened. Priority environmental issues were discussed. Relationships were formed. A knowledge base was expanded. A strategy emerged for matching resources with current and evolving opportunities with the goal, environmental sustainability. As leaders in this initiative the Foundation is committed to ongoing collaboration and continuous discernment to affect the changes that will produce the most benefit.

### Fund Development

Funding for environmental projects was identified as a key component in the success of the initiative. A goal of \$1 million in endowment funds designated to environmental granting was set, to be achieved within the seven years of the program. The Foundation already had a fund designated to the environment, the Donald McTavish Conservation Fund. With the establishment of the Mansbridge Environment Fund a vehicle to provide more general and non-specific environmental funding was created. The \$1 million goal is challenging and will require all sectors of the community working together – individuals, government, and business.

Community Foundations of Canada has formally partnered with 1% For The Planet (1%FTP) in an effort to engage local businesses in environmental philanthropy. 1%FTP is an alliance of businesses committed to leveraging their resources to create a healthier planet. In 2007 the Foundation became an approved member and qualified to receive funds from any of the 1%FTP business members. It will be eligible to display the 1%FTP logo and join with committed businesses in this innovative way to positively impact the environment now, and in the future!



### Granting

Granting to environmental projects has always been an important component of the Foundation's program. Prior to the **POET Program** eighteen percent of the Foundation's endowment funds were designated to environmental causes. In this new initiative key issues were identified to help build capacity in the sector and to illustrate the unique environmental needs and opportunities that exist in the area. These include the urban/rural dichotomy, the need for collaborative efforts, the advantages of building on community strengths, the value of measurable results, the importance of education, and the need to balance larger projects with smaller grass-roots initiatives.

Potential areas of granting recognized include

- wildlife; natural habitats; ecosystems
- alternative energy
- education
- recycling
- air quality; emissions
- transportation; bike and walking paths
- water quality
- local food production sustainability; buying locally.



## The Uniqueness of Perth County

Perth County is an area of diverse land use located in the middle of south-western Ontario. Although 40% of the county's population of approximately 75,000 lives in the City of Stratford, there is a distinctive rural atmosphere to Perth County. It boasts some of the best prime agricultural land in the province and is often referred to as "Ontario's food basket." Approximately 90% of the county's total land area is classified as prime agricultural land. While agriculture is an important economic activity, it has resulted in the clearing or draining of much of the area's natural areas leaving a relatively small amount of wetlands, wooded areas, and watercourses.

Southwestern Ontario is surrounded on three sides by major bodies of water that comprise the great lakes. Not situated on any of these lakes, Perth County relies almost entirely on groundwater to supply its drinking water needs. In 2001 the Perth County Groundwater Study identified protection strategies to avoid the possibility of future contamination problems.

Perth County is the source of four major rivers – the Maitland, Thames, Ausable, and Grand. Portions of the watersheds of these rivers are located in Perth County. The Upper Thames River watershed is the primary watershed located in Perth County. In 2007 the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority issued watershed report cards for 28 smaller watersheds within the Upper Thames River watershed with the goal of turning that information into local environmental action.

Tourism, an important activity in Perth County, is influenced by environmental issues. Although Stratford's Shakespearean Festival is a highlight of the region, countless attractions, both urban and rural exist in all areas of the County. The economic and quality of life benefits achieved by a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment are important considerations for residents and tourists alike whether strolling through one of the many parks in Perth County or getting lost in a corn maze.

The rural nature of Perth County is a contributing factor in the lack of county-wide public transportation systems. The City of Stratford is the only jurisdiction within Perth County that has public transportation. Escalating fuel prices, supported by health concerns and recreational issues have intensified the need for bicycle and walking paths and mixed-use trails in all areas of the County.

Working together - individuals, community organizations, governments, business, donors and funders – we will be successful in protecting and preserving our natural heritage. Environmental sustainability can be the legacy we pass on to future generations. Contact the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation today to establish your role in ensuring this legacy is a reality!

The best time to plant a tree is twenty  
years ago; the second best time is now

Ancient Proverb



### The Donald McTavish Conservation Fund

The Donald McTavish Conservation Fund was created in 2004 by Alec and Sam (Mary) McTavish (pictured here with their children) to recognize the contribution his grandfather, Donald McTavish (1912-1999), made to preserve and restore the area's farmland, forests, wetlands and waterways. Donald McTavish farmed most of his life in what is now Perth East. He recognized the need to conserve, protect, and improve his farmland, forest and water – not only for his own benefit but also for the benefit of his offspring and future generations. He helped to educate others and during his lifetime facilitated many conservation, reforestation, and water protection projects. With the help of family and friends the fund now stands in excess of \$100,000.



Qualifying grants from this fund will be made to support long term conservancy and permanent improvements to forests, wetlands, surface water, and soil conditions within the geographic area of Perth County.

### The Mansbridge Environment Fund

“Our family believes in returning something to a community that has been so good to us,” said Peter Mansbridge and Cynthia Dale on initiating the Mansbridge Environment Fund. “Stratford and Perth County is beautiful, an area that people the world over love to visit. Hopefully the Fund in its small way will help worthy environmental projects keep it that way.”



The Foundation is pleased to have one of the most trusted faces in Canadian news invest in environmental causes in Perth County. The Fund is expected to grow as others follow the lead of these two respected Canadians.

Grants from the Mansbridge Environment Fund will support a variety of environmental organizations and projects.

For additional information on these or any of the Foundation's endowed funds visit our website [www.spcfc.ca](http://www.spcfc.ca). Opportunities exist for additional named environment funds under the **Protecting Our Environment Together (POET)** program. Contact the Foundation for further details.



# Our environment

With your help we can protect it for today  
and preserve it for tomorrow

The Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation is a registered public foundation that serves the charitable sector in Perth County. The Foundation matches acts of caring with community needs and opportunities by providing efficient, flexible donor services, grants to a broad range of interests, and leadership in understanding and responding to current and emergent community needs.

**For more information contact the Foundation at 519-271-1503 or [info@spccf.ca](mailto:info@spccf.ca).**

**Visit our environmental initiatives webpage at [www.spccf.ca/enviro](http://www.spccf.ca/enviro).**



STRATFORD and PERTH COUNTY

**community**  
FOUNDATION

**Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation**

**59 Lorne Avenue East, Unit A, PO Box 21092**

**Stratford, ON N5A 7V4**

**Phone 519-271-1503 Fax 519-271-1504**

**[info@spccf.ca](mailto:info@spccf.ca) [www.spccf.ca](http://www.spccf.ca)**

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