

# UPCOMING DATES

- OCTOBER 10**  
Durham Region Council, 10:00 a.m.  
Brampton Council, 1:00 p.m.
- OCTOBER 11**  
Peel Region Council, 9:30 a.m.
- OCTOBER 11-13**  
National Heritage Summit with keynote speakers Ros Kerslake, Mark Kingwell and Andrew Emond, Fairmont Queen Elizabeth, Montreal
- OCTOBER 15**  
Halton Hills Council, 6:30 p.m.  
Pickering Council, 7:30 p.m.  
Oshawa Council, 6:30 p.m.  
Uxbridge Council, 7:00 p.m.  
Newmarket Council, 7:00 p.m.
- OCTOBER 16**  
Whitchurch-Stouffville Council, 3:00 p.m.
- OCTOBER 18**  
York Region Council, 9:30 a.m.
- OCTOBER 22**  
Oakville Planning & Development Council, 7:00 p.m.  
Richmond Hill Council, 7:30 p.m.  
Clarington Council, 7:00 p.m.
- OCTOBER 23**  
Caledon Council, 1:00 p.m.  
Aurora Council, 7:00 p.m.  
Simcoe County Council, 9:00 a.m.
- OCTOBER 24**  
Brampton Council, 1:00 p.m.



## The importance of low impact development

# WASHED OUT

By Jake Tobin Garrett

As the Greater Toronto Area continues to grow and develop, the increase in impermeable surfaces from the urbanization process has serious effects on our watersheds and the health of Lake Ontario, where our drinking water comes from.

Credit Valley Conservation water resources engineer **Phil James** told *NRU* that watershed studies conducted by the conservation authority showed an environmental decline in some of its urban areas demonstrated by issues of water quality, erosion and flooding. Continuing with conventional approaches to stormwater management would result in “seriously impaired watersheds, which [is] very concerning.”

One of 36 conservation authorities in the province, Credit Valley Conservation promoted the use of low impact development as an alternative to traditional stormwater management at a two-day conference last week. Examples of low impact development include permeable pavement, rain barrels and plants that filter and slow down stormwater run-off.

Rather than collecting stormwater that has run off impermeable surfaces—collecting contaminants along the way—and funnelled into a pipe, low impact development filters out contaminants and manages rain where it falls.

“As we alter our watersheds and we pave the surfaces and we apply salt to our roads and we wash our cars in the driveway, we start to modify the hydrology and the water quality,” James said. “Low impact development is an approach that restores the hydrologic pathways and reverses some of the degradation that occurs.”

Low impact development does not just offer municipalities a more environmentally friendly way to manage stormwater, but a way to save on costs as well with reduced long-term infrastructure costs. Conference keynote speaker, **Ajax** mayor **Steve Parish**, told *NRU* that while the upfront capital costs can sometimes be higher, “the 20 and 30 year payback is there.”

Additionally, Credit Valley Conservation deputy CAO and water resources director **John Kinkead** told *NRU* that low impact development technologies could free up land for developers who would not have to put in the traditional retention ponds. “It’s our view that over time we can back off on some of the end of pipe requirements,” he said.

Parish argued that watershed issues need to be incorporated upfront in the planning process. Ajax introduced low impact development into its official plan in 2000.

“We’ve got to start understanding that everything starts with

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Ian A.R. Graham, Publisher  
iang@nrupublishing.com

Lynn Morrow, Editor  
lynnm@nrupublishing.com

Jake Tobin Garrett  
Planning Reporter  
jakeg@nrupublishing.com

Julie Baldassi  
Municipal Affairs Reporter  
julieb@nrupublishing.com

Jeff Payette, Design/Layout  
jeffp@nrupublishing.com

Irena Kohn  
Sales and Circulation  
irenak@nrupublishing.com

Twitter @nrupublishing

SALES/SUBSCRIPTIONS  
circ@nrupublishing.com

Annual subscription rate is \$349 +HST (ON).

Complimentary trial subscriptions are available.

Advertising rates available upon request.

*NRU* Greater Toronto Area Edition is not to be redistributed without the written consent of the publisher.

*NRU* Greater Toronto Area Edition is published 50 times a year by email by *NRU* Publishing Inc.

*NRU* Publishing Inc.  
Editorial Office  
26 Soho Street, Suite 330  
Toronto, ON M5T 1Z7  
Tel: 416.260.1304  
Fax: 416.979.2707

Billings Department  
46 Old Bridle Path  
Toronto, ON M4T 1A7  
Tel: 416.440.0073  
Fax: 416.440.0074  
ISSN 1918-7548



# PAYING FOR IT

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competitive within the GTA and that they will be phased in for industrial and office development. “This will lessen the impact on increasing on the business community, which is what we heard in the public consulting process.”

Anderson took a different stance, arguing that, while development charges are important, “municipalities cannot continue building the infrastructure we do solely on the backs of the development industry... We need sustained revenue other than building permits and we’re going to get that sustained revenue from the federal government

and the Province of Ontario if they want this province to succeed.”

Making the gas tax permanent was good, he said, “but, folks, we need more than that.” He appealed to those in the room for help.

“You folks have to work with the municipalities in this province to make sure minister [Jim] Flaherty and Prime Minister [Steven] Harper understand that infrastructure is a vital component to the future growth of this province. And we need a long-term, reliable source of revenue.” 

# WASHED OUT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

our official plan,” Parish told *NRU*. “It’s really important that principles of low impact development be engrained right in our official plans and in our lead documents so that it’s not kind of one-off and ad hoc, but becomes just part of the way you do business.”

Similarly, he argued that the way watershed studies are done is “fundamentally backwards.”

“How can you plan a development that eliminates erosion, eliminates flooding and purifies to the maximum extent stormwater run off, if you don’t know the dynamics of how that watershed works? And the answer is, you can’t,” he said. “Watershed studies must come upfront and not at the end of the process.”

With funding from the province, Credit Valley Conservation is monitoring the performance of low impact development projects at a number of sites in the GTA with the hope that these local demonstration projects can encourage the use of low impact development. “You need something in that municipality—in that neighbourhood—to convince people that it can work there,” Kinkead said.

Part of the challenge with issues of stormwater treatment is properly engaging and educating the public on the importance of something which is hidden from them. Parish said Ajax runs a number of programs meant to highlight stormwater issues and the connection between what you pour down the drain and what goes into the lake.

“A lot of what we’re talking about is below the ground surface so it’s hard,” Kinkead said. He mentioned that interpretive signage exists at each of the demonstration sites, which illustrates what’s going on. “We’re getting some pretty positive feedback,” he said.

James added that aesthetics are also an important part of the process for ensuring community buy-in to low impact development solutions. Many of the projects have a landscaping aspect and “being neat and tidy and beautiful is very important to promote to residents, on top of the fact that these measures and technologies filter and treat and clean the water that goes into Lake Ontario.”

“If we don’t get the aesthetics right, we’re not going to be as successful with low impact development as we want to be,” he said. 

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## Erratum

In the October 3rd edition, *NRU* incorrectly reported Jennifer Evans’ new position. Evans is the new chief of police. *NRU* regrets the error.