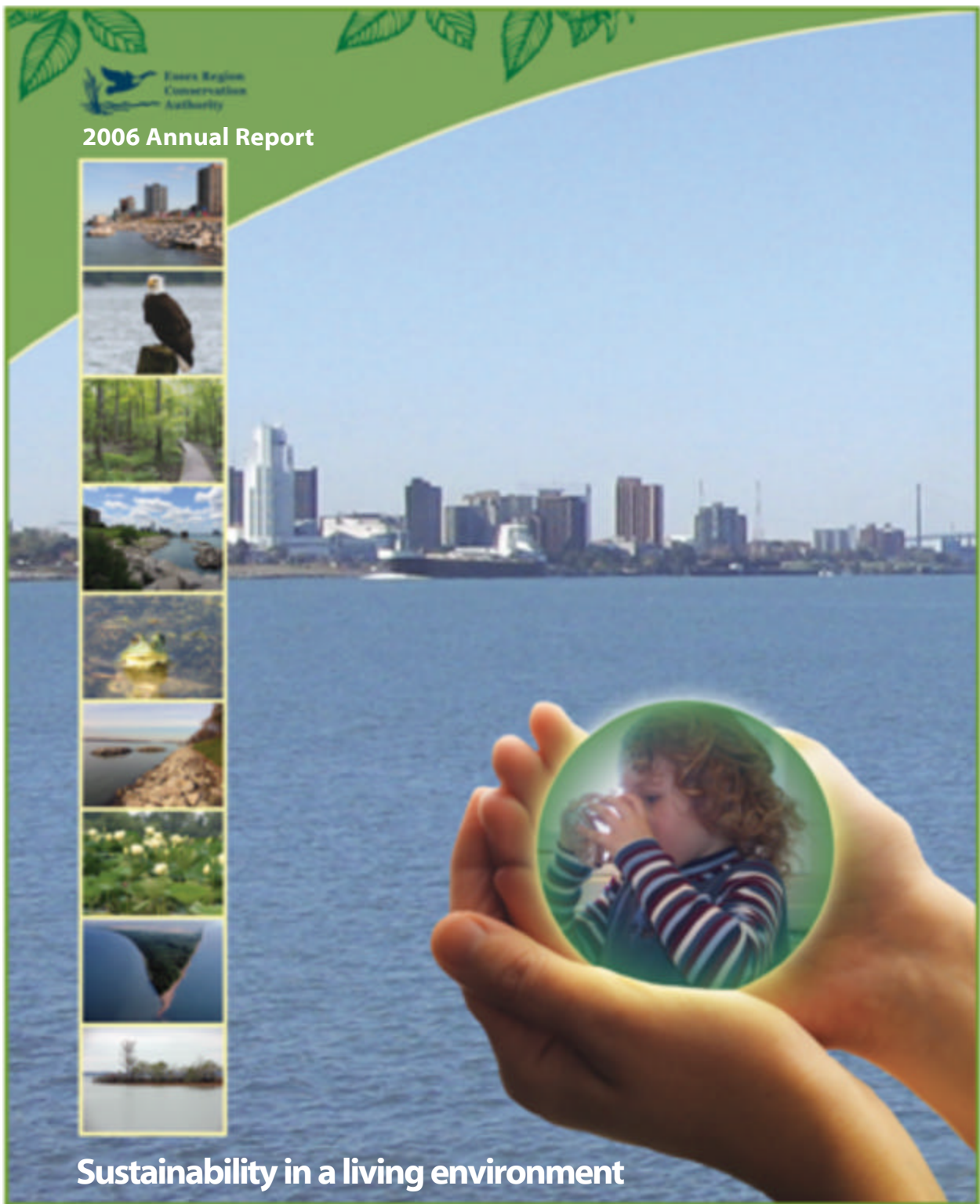




2006 Annual Report

Sustainability in a living environment



message from the chair



2006 Board of Directors

Amherstburg

Anthony Leardi
Leonard Mailloux

Essex

Morley Bowman
Richard Meloche

Kingsville

Nelson Santos
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Lakeshore

Tom Bain
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Windsor

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David Cassivi
Ron Jones
Tom Wilson,
Vice Chair

2006 marked a watershed moment in history, as the Clean Water Act was passed into law. This important piece of legislation will help to ensure that Ontario's drinking water sources can be protected for generations to come.

While ERCA, and all of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities, have a long track record of managing natural resources on a watershed basis, this next phase in our history is one I look forward to with great enthusiasm. The source water protection process will require that stakeholders across Ontario's watersheds come together and collaboratively develop watershed based source protection plans. This past year, ERCA engaged numerous stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, and produced science-based technical reports that will be critical to developing Source Protection Plans.

While Source Protection Planning has been a significant focus over the past year, it remained within the context of our integrated approach to watershed management. No program or project was initiated with a singular focus: all of our resource management

decisions continue to be based on a comprehensive, ecosystem approach; striving always to create a future of sustainability for this region.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors for their continued commitment. I also extend my thanks to our volunteers, without whom many of the successes identified on the following pages would not have been possible. Thanks to our municipal partners, and the Federal and Provincial Governments for their support. I would also like to thank the staff at ERCA: they work tirelessly every day to improve the environment that we all share. Finally, thank you to the many regional residents who have done their part to contribute to a healthier future for the Essex Region.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Ray Renaud".

Ray Renaud, Chair



message from the general manager

As always, the year 2006 brought with it a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Our Strategic Plan: Accelerating the Pace Towards A Sustainable Community continued to set our goals and

directions. There are many interpretations of the term 'sustainability'. We regard sustainability as balancing the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to utilize our shared natural resources.

In addition to Source Water Protection initiatives, the Sustainable Management Strategy for Southeast Leamington was a high priority item in 2006. Ensuring homes and people are protected from the dangers of flooding and erosion is a delegated responsibility for Conservation Authorities, and striving to find a workable solution for this flood and erosion-prone area was a key focus in this past year.

Healthy watersheds and the health of our Great Lakes are critical and ongoing focuses, interrelated with all the work that we do. ERCA worked with a significant number of land-owners, as well as private funding partners and senior levels of government to implement water quality improvement projects for the benefit of our Great Lakes watersheds.

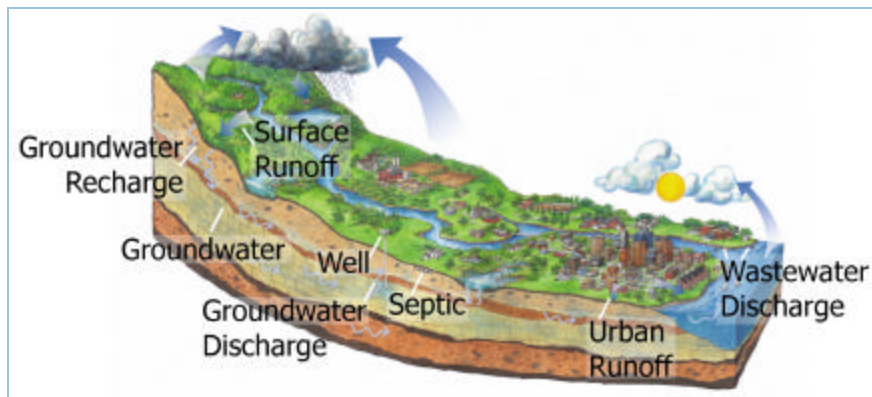
This annual report provides a snapshot of our accomplishments in the past year. It is provided as a measure of accountability to our municipal partners, and to the residents of the Essex Region. I would encourage everyone to 'share in the responsibility' of a cleaner and healthier environment. Become part of the solution by making wise choices every day, supporting the protection of existing natural areas and, where possible, restoring lands to a natural state. We encourage your feedback on our priorities and strategic direction, and look forward to continuing to work with you, for our environment, our future.

Ken Schmidt
General Manager / Secretary-Treasurer

towards a sustainable community

Watersheds have been identified as the best model for managing our natural resources. A watershed is an area of land that is drained by a river, stream or a lake. When it comes to watersheds, we are all connected. What we do on the land is reflected in the quality and quantity of our sources of water. It is important to remember that we all live downstream from someone else.

Proper watershed management is also critically important for achieving a state of sustainability for the future of this region. A sustainable community is one which balances a healthy environment, healthy economy and the human health of its residents.



A watershed is an area of land that is drained by a river, creek, or other body of water.



protecting and improving water

In 2006, the Clean Water Act became law, and with it, came a strengthened role for Conservation Authorities as we partner with municipalities and our local communities to develop Source Protection Plans. ERCA completed its Draft Watershed Characterization Report, consisting of a comprehensive compilation of existing information which will be used in the future to help identify potential vulnerable areas, threats and other issues. This technical report will support the future Source Protection Committee in developing the Source Protection Plans, which are expected to be complete in 2009.

Surface Water

Quality Monitoring continued at 45 stations across the region, Groundwater Monitoring was undertaken at 10 sites and ERCA released its first Watershed Report Card. Using the protocol identified by Conservation Ontario, this comprehensive look at overall watershed health reviews surface water, groundwater and forest health. In general, most watersheds received a grade of C or lower for Surface Water Quality and a failing grade for

Forest Conditions. While trend data show that forest cover is increasing throughout most of the region, surface water quality problems are more persistent.

As well, Rural/Agricultural Best Management Practices were implemented through Clean Water~Green Spaces and other funding sources. More than 30 acres of fragile lands were retired and planted

with seedlings. Over 10 kms of buffer strips were planted, rock chutes were constructed on 20 farms, and 17 septic systems were upgraded by providing over \$200,000 dollars in incentive grants to 75 landowners.



Sunoco Earth Day 2006: Windsor Mayor Eddie Francis, Dan Ralph (Director of Retail Operations Western Region, Suncor Energy Foundation), Brian Masse (MP Windsor-West), Ray Renaud (ERCA Chair), Tony Berends (Retail Territory Manager, Suncor Energy Foundation), Jed Goldberg (Earth Day Canada)

Opposite: *The Clean Water Act will require communities to work together in order to protect the sources of their drinking water. In the Essex Region, virtually all drinking water comes from Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, or the Detroit River. Managing source water on a watershed basis will ensure that drinking water quality and quantity will be protected for generations to come.*



protecting natural areas and enhancing biodiversity

While the United Nations and ERCA's own strategic plan both identify a minimum target of 12% natural areas coverage for our region to be healthy and sustainable, currently, merely 7.5% of our landbase is in a natural state. However, on the positive side, more than 5500 acres of habitat have been gained since 1992.

2006 proved to be one of our most successful tree planting seasons to date, with more than 205,000 trees being planted or distributed, and over 200 acres of habitat restored in partnership with more than 100 private landowners, Environment Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation. ERCA also worked with their partners from the Ministry of Natural Resources and others to offer incentives grants and technical advice to 75 landowners who wished to diversify their woodlots with native Carolinian species through the Emerald Ash Borer - Natural Areas Restoration Grant Program.

Through the Clean Water-Green Spaces initiative, ERCA assisted the City of Windsor in protecting 100 acres of habitat in the Spring Garden Complex.

Natural Heritage Feature studies were initiated in Windsor and Lakeshore as part of those municipalities' Official Plan Review processes. The results of these studies, which will be finalized early in 2007, will be used to guide the development of natural areas protection and restoration policies in the new Official

Plans, as well as inform other municipal activities, for example, property acquisition.

Twelve seed collection and tree identification workshops were held in partnership with local schools and the community at large, resulting in one of the largest community-based seed collection efforts in Canada. In total, more than 3000 pounds of local tree seed was collected this year, and more than 50 community members have been certified as seed collectors in the past two years. These significant efforts will allow us to continue to plant more native Carolinian trees in our region in future years.

The Essex-Erie Aquatic Species at Risk Recovery Strategy, documenting the rare species in our watercourses and shoreline areas was prepared, and a communications strategy was launched to help raise awareness about actions that can be taken to protect them. In addition, high priority riparian (streamside) habitat restoration projects were completed.

Opposite: School children and local residents were engaged in seed collection and tree identification workshops, resulting in one of the largest community-based seed collection efforts in Canada. The collected stock will be propagated into native tree seedlings that will be replanted in this region in future years.



protecting homes and people from flood and erosion

Through our Regulations and Development Reviews, ERCA continued to ensure protection against flooding and erosion, as well as prevent adverse impacts on flows, water quality and habitats, and interference with natural coastal processes.

In 2006, Ontario Regulation 97/04, Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alteration to Shorelines and Watercourses, otherwise known as the Generic Regulation, was implemented following the mapping, public consultation and peer review on this province-wide, standardized regulation.

The Sustainable Management Strategy for Southeast Leamington continued, and the Technical Report and Draft Future Management Strategies released. This comprehensive study examines coastal processes, shoreline and interior flooding and erosion hazards, ecological and socio-economic issues, and is critical to making long term, sustainable management decisions about the future of this flood and erosion prone area.

Through ERCA's Geographic Information Systems, a new Property Information Management system was created, increasing efficiency for permit reviews, planning applications and habitat enhancement projects.

With funding assistance from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Turkey Creek Flood Control project was completed to maintain the flow capacity of major

flood control channels constructed by ERCA in early 1990s. Blockages were selectively removed along portions of the Cahill Drain and Turkey Creek in LaSalle. As well, the Little River Dykes were upgraded and repaired to improve flood protection to more than 2000 flood-prone homes in East Windsor. Engineering studies were completed for future upgrades and major maintenance to several of ERCA's existing flood control structures, including the Pelee Island Dykes, Belle River Flood Control, and Leamington Road 1 Dyke.

Shoreline protections works were completed in the City of Windsor at Legacy Park on the Detroit River west of Caron Ave. Five hundred metres of shoreline were stabilized, fish habitat was improved, as were recreation facilities, public access and safety. New safety chains were also installed along various other waterfront parks through the City.

Opposite: *Finding a long-term, sustainable management strategy for Southeast Leamington was one of our largest focuses in 2006.*



conservation education and communication

ERCA undertook significant education and outreach opportunities in 2006. Workshops, public meetings, and seminars were hosted on initiatives such as Source Water Protection, Tree Planting and Care, Seed Collection Workshops, Pesticide Free Gardening, and the Sustainable Management Strategy for Southeast Leamington.

Through our participation in more than 50 environmental outreach initiatives, we were able to effectively help thousands of adults and children learn more about conservation issues and initiatives. Our website was visited more than 12,000 times, and nearly 100 media news releases were issued, resulting in more than 350 newspaper, radio and televised newscasts.

As well, more than 30 special events were held at Conservation Areas across the region to promote conservation initiatives, healthy and active living, and our local heritage. We introduced the Urban Conservation Challenge, and invited inner-city children to take part in a special day of conservation activities. ERCA again partnered with the CAW to host the Youth Environment Network Day at Holiday Beach Conservation Area.

More than 10,000 students from Windsor and Essex County participated in Conservation Education and Heritage Field Studies to learn more about the importance of protecting our environment and preserving our heritage. We are grateful to our partners from the CIBC and

Family Tradition Foods Incorporated who continue to 'Sponsor our Future' through Conservation Education.



Through our Friends of Watersheds program, six active groups conducted 50 tree planting and habitat restoration projects, workshops, tours, and stream cleanup events, effectively engaging more than 1400 volunteers in creating a cleaner and healthier environment.

Volunteers continued to make significant contributions to our conservation areas. More than 2800 volunteer hours were logged at the John R. Park Homestead to help visitors learn more about our local heritage, while numerous volunteers at Hillman Marsh and Holiday Beach helped organize birding festivals and delighted visitors with birding demonstrations.

Opposite: *Friends of Watershed programs engaged schoolchildren and adults across the region to take action to improve the environment that we all share.*

providing nature-based recreational opportunities

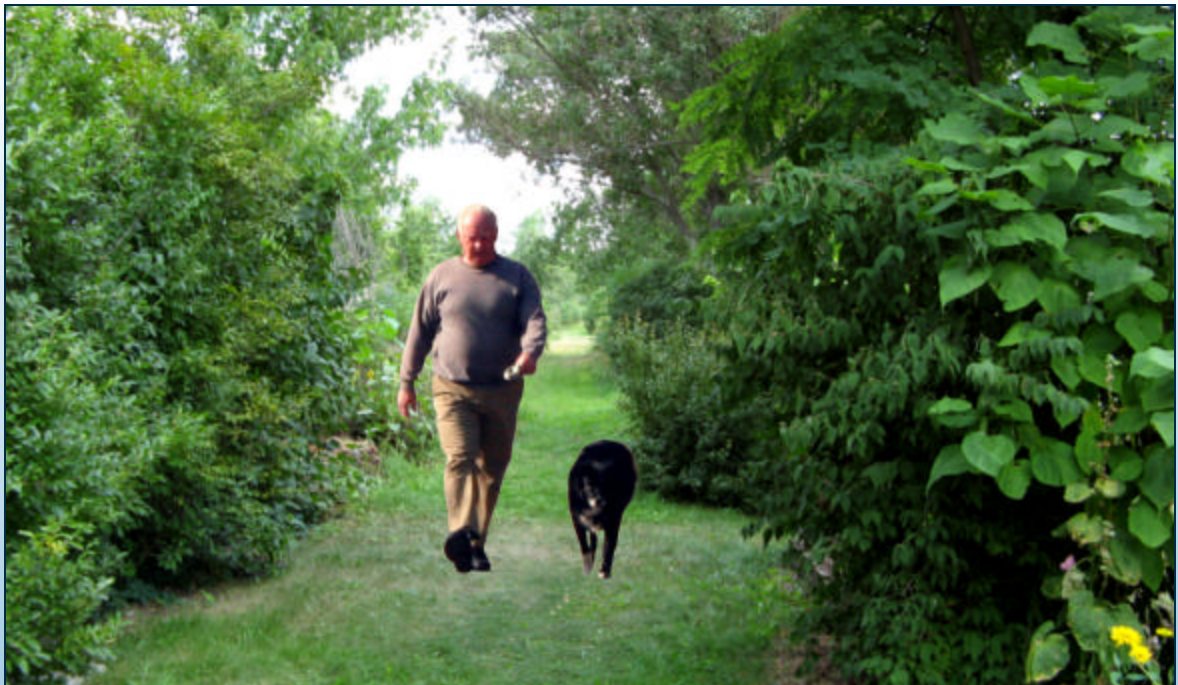
ERCA continues to manage its 19 Conservation Areas not only to protect their significant natural features, but also to provide venues for healthy and active lifestyles. Sixteen of these are open to the public to offer hiking, biking, swimming, kayaking and camping and other recreational activities to residents and tourists alike.

In 2006, work along the Amherstburg-Essex Greenway continued, and the development of two new Conservation Areas was initiated. Construction began at Petite Côte Conservation Area in the Town of LaSalle, and a nature trail and boardwalk will be constructed in order to provide viewing access of the Detroit River - A Canadian Heritage River. Also, a public open house was held in collaboration with the Town

of Amherstburg to generate public opinion on amenities to include in the Detroit River Heritage Lookout - another access point to the Detroit River.

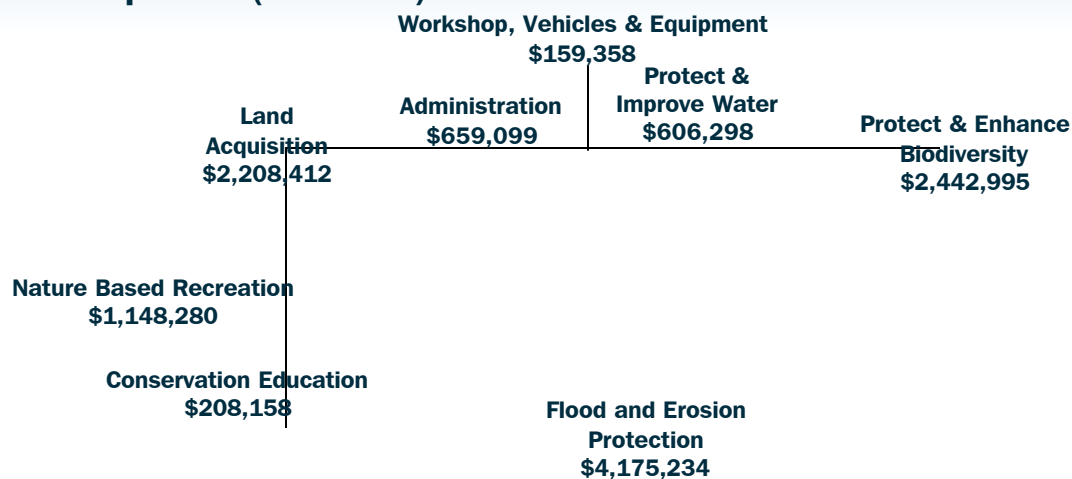
New interpretive signage was installed at the Kingsville Train Station and the Hillman Marsh Shorebird Habitat, as well as along the Detroit River Heritage Parkway. Visitor facilities were also improved at Holiday Beach Conservation Area as new washrooms were constructed.

Recognizing the growing importance of diversifying our tourism products, ERCA was a key partner in the Regional Birding Strategy, and looks forward to implementing its recommendations in the future.



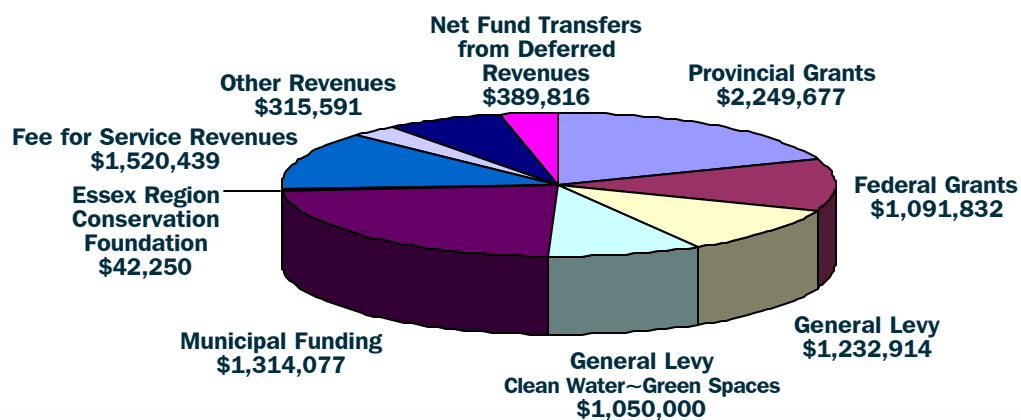
2006 financial review

Expenses (unaudited)



Total Expenses: \$11,607,834

Revenues (unaudited)



Total Revenues: \$11,607,834

Note: The 2006 unaudited financial review has been projected based on information received by December 30, 2006. Audited financial statements will be available in June, 2007.

Big Creek Conservation Area • Cedar Beach Conservation Area • Cedar Creek Conservation Area • Chrysler Canada Greenway • Crystal Bay Conservation Area • Devonwood Conservation Area • Hillman Marsh Conservation Area • Holiday Beach Conservation Area • John R. Park Homestead & Conservation Area • Kopegaron Woods Conservation Area • Maidstone Conservation Area • McAuliffe Woods Conservation Area • Ruscom Shores Conservation Area • Stone Road Alvar Conservation Area • Tremblay Beach Conservation Area •

Big Creek • Cedar Beach • Cedar Creek • Chrysler Canada Greenway • Crystal Bay • Devonwood • Hillman Marsh • Holiday Beach • John R. Park Homestead • Kopegaron Woods • Maidstone • McAuliffe Woods • Ruscom Shores • Stone Road Alvar • Tremblay Beach

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