



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: Ontario Potato Board, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Farm Review, Ontario Farmer, Innisfil Examiner, Innisfil Scope, Innisfil Journal, Alliston Herald, The Times of New Tecumseth, Bradford Times, A News, Rogers First Local

### Group working to share limited Innisfil Creek water resources

UTOPIA, Ontario, March 25, 2009– Ralph MacKenzie remembers the drought of 2007. The yield from his potato and bean crops at Nottawasaga Valley Farms, as well as his bottom line, was impacted by the lack of water to irrigate his fields.

“We were almost 14 weeks without any measurable rainfall,” says MacKenzie. “Irrigation became critical even to keep crops alive, let alone to improve crop yield.”

Data collected by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) showed that by the end of June that year, the average water flow in Innisfil Creek, which is estimated to be 5,000 gallons-per minute during dry summer months, dropped to 356 gallons-per-minute.

MacKenzie and his neighbours soon realized they could not all irrigate at the same time. They set up a voluntary water taking schedule to help minimize the impact on other water users and to help reduce the ecological impact of the drought.

Not wanting to experience the effects of another severe drought, MacKenzie was eager to take part in the development of an integrated water resource management strategy for the Innisfil Creek area, which was spearheaded by the NVCA and greatly assisted by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture through Keith Currie, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

“As a local producer and an irrigator from Innisfil Creek, I knew I had to be part of the solution,” says MacKenzie.

Throughout the fall of 2008, members of the Innisfil Creek agricultural community and staff from the NVCA met regularly to discuss individual producer irrigation requirements, the extent of existing water supplies and available irrigation alternatives which are both achievable and cost-effective.

Included in the strategy was the creation of the Innisfil Creek Water Users Association (ICWUA) for which MacKenzie now serves as Chair. The local association will represent the voices of the irrigation-dependent community in the Innisfil Creek area and promote best management practices to local water users. The ICWUA will also



Members of the Innisfil Creek Water Users Association. From left to right: Ralph MacKenzie, Kevin Thompson, Tom Brayford, Frank Solty, Donny Lundy, Ross Reynolds and Ryan Post, NVCA Hydrogeologist.

#### Member Municipalities

Adjala-Tosorontio

Amaranth

Barrie

The Blue Mountains

Bradford-West Gwillimbury

Clearview

Collingwood

Essa

Innisfil

Melancthon

Mono

Mulmur

New Tecumseth

Oro-Medonte

Grey Highlands

Shelburne

Springwater

Wasaga Beach

#### Watershed Counties

Simcoe

Dufferin

Grey

Member of



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assist the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources with water-related issues and identify opportunities to improve the water quantity in the Innisfil Creek area.

“My fellow farmers and I will benefit from local-level management of limited water resources. We must all work together to recognize the economic, social and environmental benefit of sharing water resources,” says MacKenzie.

The Innisfil Creek area has long been noted for its vast agricultural fields and exceptional crop production of potato, sod, carrots and onions, which as of 2006 was valued at about \$10 million.

Working in partnership with the agricultural community, the NVCA is providing local program coordination and technical support to the Innisfil Creek Water Users Association.

*The development of the integrated water resource management strategy was funded in part through contributions by the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario under the Canada-Ontario Water Supply Expansion Program, an initiative of the federal-provincial-territorial Agriculture Policy Framework designed to position Canada’s agri-food sector as a world leader. The Agricultural Adaptation Council administers COWSEP on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario.*

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- 30 -



### About the NVCA

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority is a public agency dedicated to the preservation of a healthy environment through specialized programs to protect, conserve and enhance our water, wetlands, forests and lands.

For more information about the ICWUA and the integrated water resource management strategy, please contact:

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