



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Warmer, Wetter, Wilder: Environment and Climate Change's David Phillips talks climate change at NVCA's AGM**

#### **Authority developing climate change action plan**

UTOPIA, Ontario (January 30, 2017) – It's a known fact that Canadian's love to talk about the weather. And if predictions are correct, we're going to have a lot more to talk about.

That's because "Climate change is the here and now."

So said David Phillips, senior climatologist with Environment and Climate Change Canada, to those gathered for the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority's annual general meeting on January 27, 2017, in Utopia, Ontario.

Mr. Phillips spoke about the climate and weather changes already being experienced in southern Ontario, pointing to recent catastrophic events like the Burlington flood of 2014 and the Muskoka flood of 2015, and the dramatically changing water levels on Lake Huron over the past few years.

"There is growing evidence to suggest that the extremes of weather are becoming more extreme," said Mr. Phillips. "I've had farmers tell me that have never seen such variability in the weather. Recently they've needed flood insurance and drought insurance in the same season."

Conservation authorities across the province are taking action to address climate change. NVCA is no exception. The authority is in the midst of developing a climate action plan that is expected to be rolled out mid-year.

"Conservation authorities, with their focus on flood monitoring and planning, are going to be the front-line responders to the growing issue of climate change," added Mr. Phillips.

Research by NVCA shows that as the climate changes, the Nottawasaga Valley will be warmer and wetter overall, with more changeable weather, including more intense storms and more periods of



drought. Local streams and rivers will be warmer, fundamentally changing the 'climate' for fish and other aquatic life.

This changing climate will lead to more flooding and erosion in the spring followed by drought in the summer. Local woods, wetlands and streams will see decreases in biodiversity, and surface water quality will be negatively affected. There may be some benefits too, including longer growing seasons for local area farmers and gardeners.

"We need to prepare ourselves for the changing weather to come," said Mr. Phillips. He pointed to several ways that conservation authorities and municipalities can start preparing today, including strengthening aging infrastructure like sewer pipes to withstand weather extremes, enforcing building codes, conducting routine maintenance like pruning trees to avoid damage during ice storms, and ensuring green infrastructure like wetlands are preserved.

"Studies from the United States have shown that every dollar spent on preparing for weather extremes saves hundreds of dollars in cleaning up from natural disasters like severe storms and flooding," commented Mr. Phillips.

The time for action is now.

"What is most unsettling is the speed of climate change. What used to change over hundreds of years now changes in a decade or two," said Mr. Phillips. "Climate change is often thought of as a slow emergency, so it gets pushed to the bottom of the pile. But we need more science and more policy today to ensure we are prepared to deal with the realities tomorrow."

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**About 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.

NVCA's climate research can be found at [www.nvca.on.ca/watershed-science/climate-change](http://www.nvca.on.ca/watershed-science/climate-change)

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