

# Conservation Halton taking part in drought program

By LISA CARTWRIGHT

The Champion

Drought may seem unlikely with all the recent rain but just in case, Conservation Halton (CH) wants to be prepared.

Conservation Ontario, of which CH is a member, the Province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario have joined forces to develop the Ontario Water Response 2000 Program.

"Ontario Water Response 2000 has been produced to ensure that the Province is prepared for this summer in case the low-water conditions of 1999 in southwestern and eastern Ontario con-

tinue," Ray Guther, manager of watershed engineering services for CH, wrote in his report presented to CH's resource planning and water advisory committee during its June 15 meeting.

The program was set up after the Provincial Low Water Level Response Task Force recommended the government develop a low-water level strategy.

Part of the strategy is to set up an action plan so CH will know how to respond to low water levels in its watershed, said Robert Edmondson, director of watershed management services.

According to Mr. Guther's report, the Ministry of Natural Resources will regularly monitor water levels.

When it notices low levels, it will contact con-

servation authorities to confirm the results, Mr. Edmondson said.

Then the Water Response Team (WRT) will jump into action.

The team consists of a number of parties including representatives of agriculture, industry and business communities as well as recreational users, local and regional municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial ministries and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The WRT will then issue three warning levels: Level one, in which there's a 10 per cent reduction in water usage and focuses on voluntary conservation; level two, consisting of a further 10 per cent reduction in water usage and restrictions on non-essential use; and level three, which

entails restrictions and regulations of non-essential uses.

Non-essential uses include those that can be interrupted for short-period of times without significant impact —swimming pools, lawn watering, fountains and vehicle washing.

Mr. Edmondson said it's important to prepare for water shortage not only for recreation and human consumption, but for nature as well.

While the program could kick into place this year if there was a water shortage, Mr. Edmondson said CH is now researching the program including its role in it.

"Our game plan is to take a look at a number of municipalities and ministries and see what they are doing," Mr. Edmondson said.

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