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Media Release - For Immediate Release

Major increase in long-term tree planting in Ontario now possible

Ontario government sets target of 50 million new trees by 2020

(Toronto, August 13, 2007) The Ontario government announcement today of its plan to plant 50 million trees across southern Ontario by 2020 is a major step forward for the environment and for tree planting agencies across the province.

"This is the single largest tree planting commitment we have seen in Ontario in a very long time," said Michael Scott, President and CEO of the Trees Ontario Foundation (TOF). "This is great news for the environment - for the battle against climate change and for our watersheds. It also means that we can now begin work with our partners to ensure that we reach the 2020 target."

In Phase 1 of the program, the Ministry of Natural Resources, through its partnership with the Trees Ontario Foundation, will invest more than \$4 million to support the planting of 2 million more trees beyond current levels, by 2009. The Ministry will also work with TOF and its partners to build annual tree planting to levels that will meet the target of 50 million trees by 2020.

Tree planting agencies such as Conservation Authorities and Ontario Stewardship currently plant approximately 2 million trees across Southern Ontario each year. Thanks to \$2 million in funding from the Ontario government announced in last March's Ontario Budget, the TOF was able to help these agencies increase that number by more than 700,000 trees this past spring.

"Today's commitment will allow our partners to rebuild the tree planting infrastructure necessary to get 50 million thriving trees in the ground by 2020," added Mr. Scott. "It takes expertise and sustained funding to successfully plant the right kind of trees in the right places", observed Scott.

Trees are vital for the quality of the air we breathe, and play an important role in reducing the greenhouse gas effect. One healthy, mature tree provides enough oxygen for four people each day. It takes about 80 mature trees to remove from the air the four tonnes of emissions per year that a mid-sized car produces. In addition to releasing oxygen and capturing carbon, trees help to prevent soil erosion, provide habitat for animals, and filter our water— all things that can help clean our air and protect our watersheds.

Agencies that assist with tree planting efforts include Ontario's Conservation Authorities, Conservation Ontario, Stewardship Ontario, the Ontario Forestry Association, the Forest Gene Conservation Association, the Ontario Tree Seed Plant and privately owned nurseries. The Trees Ontario Foundation works closely with skilled foresters in these agencies, who identify optimal planting sites, and work with landowners to ensure the appropriate selection of native seedlings for specific geographic areas.

Landowners participating in tree planting on their property may be eligible for The Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP), which allows landowners owning more than four hectares of forested land to reduce their property tax if they prepare and follow a Managed Forest Plan for their property. Last year, more than 1200 people attended province-wide workshops organized by the Ontario Forestry Association and the Trees Ontario Foundation, to learn about the program.

"As we prepare for the 2008 planting season, we want to encourage private landowners interested in having subsidized tree planting occur on their land to contact TOF or their local tree planting agency," added Mr. Scott. "By working together – our planting partners, landowners and the Trees Ontario Foundation – we can restore our forests and help clean our air."

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*The **Trees Ontario Foundation** (TOF) is a non-profit corporation established to promote and support tree planting initiatives in Ontario through partnering with tree planting agencies (www.treesontario.on.ca).*

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Tree Fact Sheet

The Trees Ontario Foundation (TOF) is a non-profit corporation, established in 1994 to promote and support tree planting initiatives in Ontario through partnering with tree planting agencies. TOF's partners include Ontario's Conservation Authorities, Stewardship Ontario, private tree planters and nurseries, the Ontario Forestry Association, the Ontario Tree Seed Plant, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Forest Gene Conservation Association.

- Ontario has 71 million hectares of forested land, making it the second largest forested area among Canadian provinces.
- Forests have been dramatically depleted - there is an urgent need for more trees and forests in Ontario. In Southern Ontario, urban sprawl, global warming and the cost of planting trees have combined to reduce the overall tree stock. In the last decade, the number of trees planted annually on private lands in Southern Ontario has decreased dramatically. Currently, only 2 million trees a year are planted. This means that 20 million new trees need to be planted, each year, if we are to address this serious problem.
- Thanks to \$2 million in funding directed to the Trees Ontario Foundation in this year's Ontario Budget, more than 2.7 million trees were planted, mostly in Southern Ontario. Approximately 400,000 of these were planted in Ontario's Greenbelt.
- Trees sequester (trap) carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. They do this during photosynthesis to form carbohydrates that are used for growth. They return oxygen back to the atmosphere as a by-product.
- About half of the greenhouse effect is caused by CO₂. Trees act as a 'carbon sink' by removing the carbon and storing it as cellulose in their trunks, branches, leaves and roots while releasing oxygen back into the air.
- Canada's 400 million hectares of forest are an enormous carbon sink, absorbing 10 to 20 times the amount of CO₂ emitted by fossil fuels each year in Canada.
- Trees also reduce the greenhouse effect by shading our homes and office buildings. Well placed trees help cut energy costs and consumption by decreasing air conditioning costs from 10% to 50% and help reduce heating costs as much as 4% to 22%.
- This combination of CO₂ removal from the atmosphere, carbon storage in wood, and the cooling effect makes trees a very efficient tool in fighting the greenhouse effect.
- A healthy tree stores about 5.9 kilograms of carbon annually. One hectare of trees absorbs enough CO₂ over one year to equal the amount produced by driving a car over 100,000 kilometres.
- The size of trees is important when it comes to carbon sequestration and speaks to the need for sustained growth. Carbon sequestration rates can be up to 90 times greater for healthy large trees than healthy small trees. For this reason, good management of the urban forest is critical to achieve maximum benefits.
- During growth, the carbon captured by trees is locked away for significant periods – often hundreds of years. Carbon is stored very quickly with fast-growing tree species, and they store it much longer than crops or tropical trees. If we re-forest promptly, a growing forest provides a positive balance as a sink. Young thriving trees and forests are the key. Most mature forests are in a state of balance (i.e. they store as much CO₂ as they emit).
- Climate change is already having a negative effect on existing trees. More trees must be planted to offset the ongoing destruction of Ontario's forests which is a direct result of global warming. There is growing evidence that environmental changes caused by elevated atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) and its potential effects on the global climate will alter forest ecosystems in Ontario.