



July 2014

## Re: Dufferin County Forest Management Plan

The Headwaters Equine Leadership Group has been working for the last 18 months to position the Headwaters region (encompassing the County of Dufferin, Town of Caledon, Town of Erin and King Township) as a centre of equine excellence in the province of Ontario.

The equine industry is a significant contributor to the economy of our communities in the Headwaters region. With 9 major agriculture and horse show facilities, 4 internationally recognized event facilities, 23,000 horses, \$100 million annual expenditures in the care and feeding of horses and another \$300 million in capital expenditures on horse and property improvements, the impact of this sector is significant.

As we get ready to welcome the world to Headwaters Horse Country during the equestrian events of the TO2015 Pan American Games, being able to showcase the quality of venues, and the critical mass of equine facilities and assets in Headwaters will further enhance our positioning in the national and international marketplace.

Throughout the region, assets like the Dufferin County Forest, our conservation areas, provincial parks and green spaces are integral to the appeal of this region as an equine centre of excellence. Maintaining these assets and the lifestyle associated with our natural landscape is critical in supporting not only the equestrian sector, but the significant economic contribution that is made to our community vibrancy through business activity that supports our rural and agricultural lifestyle. In fact, we believe our Headwaters Horse Country positioning statement says it all:

***Vibrant, cultured, rich in historic charm and steeped in equestrian tradition....and set against the backdrop of some of Ontario's most spectacular countryside, the equestrian lifestyle is supported by charming towns, villages, hamlets and a variety of amenities that help make Headwaters a centre of equine excellence.***

In determining a strategy for the Dufferin County Forest, the Headwaters Equine Leadership Group would ask that any plans be developed with a sensitivity to protecting the assets that make our region what it is – specifically the protection of our natural assets, heritage communities and landscapes, and a rural economy that is built on our agricultural sector and our sense of community.

The work of the Headwaters Equine Leadership Group in positioning the region as an international equine centre of excellence would be in jeopardy if planning and policies in regards to assets like the Dufferin County Forest contravened the values our community, citizens and businesses.

We look forward to a Dufferin County Forest Management plan that supports the work we are doing to position Headwaters Horse Country as an international centre of equine excellence.

**Headwaters Horse Country represents the equine industry in the Town of Caledon, County of Dufferin, Town of Erin and King Township. Headwaters Horse Country is an initiative of the Headwaters Equine Leadership Group, a committee of the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association and supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Headwaters Equine Leadership Group steering committee includes: Ross Millar (Chair), James Boyd, Elaine Capes, Sandra Dolson, Susan Fripp, Michele Harris, Linda Pabst, Theresa Sauren, Jamie Smyth & Stephany St.Louis.**

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