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Multi-sector allies advocate for green vaccine: Natural infrastructure a powerful tool to build back more equitably

Toronto: Today, a multi-sectoral network of over 50 community foundations, insurance industry representatives, businesses, environmental groups and green infrastructure advocates launched a new initiative called *Unflood Ontario*. Their aim is to reduce the harm caused by urban flooding by replacing hard surfaces in cities with green roofs, rain gardens, community gardens, trees and permeable pavement (aka natural infrastructure). The remedy also addresses the economic and social damage from the pandemic.

“Flooding is an equity issue as is the broader devastation caused by climate change,” said Sharon Avery, president and CEO, Toronto Foundation. “We believe green is gold when it comes to recovery. That’s why we’re so excited to partner on Unflood Ontario and promote the benefits of natural infrastructure. It’s an accessible and affordable solution that also produces multiple social, economic and environmental benefits.”

“We know the incredible financial harm caused by flooding in cities,” said Craig Stewart, VP Federal Affairs, Insurance Bureau of Canada. “We love that this initiative provides hope. After people have flood-proofed their homes, Unflood Ontario shows how easy it is to get shovels in the ground and replace hard surfaces in cities with natural infrastructure.”

UnfloodOntario.ca aims to get natural infrastructure in communities across Ontario. Step 1 shows people how easy and accessible natural infrastructure is through fun videos, online resources and actions they can take. Step 2 focuses on ensuring new federal dollars for natural infrastructure go to residents and community groups who want to install natural infrastructure where they live. This approach will help create jobs and empower people to use natural infrastructure to help address the many social inequities deepened by the COVID crisis.

“We are happy to see the Federal Government commit to a \$200 million Natural Infrastructure Fund in last week’s budget. Now we want to make sure part of it is used to help community members install green roofs, rain gardens and other natural infrastructure as part of Canada’s COVID recovery,” said Bryan Rose, Executive Director of the Niagara Community Foundation. “Here in Niagara, we have community groups, businesses, and local governments ready to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty. They just need the help from the federal government.”

“Too often people feel helpless when they think about flooding,” said Vivian Curl, Executive Director of Durham Community Foundation. “Unflood Ontario is the perfect solution to this feeling. The videos, resources and actions are made for everyone in our community, not just engineers, and they show you how easy it is to unflood Ontario, together, naturally. We urge everyone to engage with us on social and visit UnfloodOntario.ca to learn more.”

Network Members

Insurance Bureau of Canada
Burlington Foundation
Community Foundation for Kingston & Area
Community Foundation for Lennox & Addington
Community Foundations of Canada
Durham Community Foundation
Hamilton Community Foundation
Niagara Community Foundation
Oakville Community Foundation
Small Change Fund
The Community Foundation of Mississauga
The County Foundation
Toronto Foundation

Burlington Green
Canadian Freshwater Alliance
City of St. Catharines
Clean Air Partnership
Community Resilience to Extreme Weather, Toronto
Conservation Ontario
County of Northumberland
Credit Valley Conservation
David Suzuki Foundation
Durham Region
Evergreen

Geospatial Niagara
Green Communities Canada
Green Infrastructure Ontario
Green Learning
Green Roofs for Healthy Cities
Green Venture
Greenest City
Halton Environmental Network
Intact Centre for Climate Adaptation
Landscape Ontario
Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests
Municipal Natural Assets Initiative
Niagara College
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
Ontariogreen Conservation Association
Park People
Partners For Action
Rain Gardens United
Reep Green Solutions
Smart Prosperity Institute
Swim Drink Fish
The Town of Ajax
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Town of Fort Erie
Upper Thames Conservation Authority
Walker Industries
YT Foundation

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