



## Dr. Colin Carrie MP Oshawa

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### Federal Government Partners With the Nature Conservancy of Canada to Protect Grasslands and Wildlife

#### News Release

For Immediate Release

**Vancouver, BC, March 27, 2014** – Today, Dr. Colin Carrie, Member of Parliament for Oshawa and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, attended an announcement that the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and its partners acquired 1,836-acre (743-hectare) of property in the South Okanagan Similkameen. More than 30 species at risk are found on these lands, which are seen as a critical acquisition to conserve BC's vanishing native grasslands. The \$4.4 million initiative garnered a wide range of support, including the Government of Canada through the Natural Areas Conservation Program, eminent biologists, foundations, local naturalists' clubs and hundreds of individuals.

“This landmark project marks another achievement under our Government's Natural Areas Conservation Program,” said the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Canada's Environment Minister, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council. “With this investment, we are taking real action to protect and conserve our country's ecosystems for present and future generations.”

“Our government is committed to working with dedicated partners, like the Nature Conservancy of Canada, for the long-term conservation of the biological diversity of Canada's natural treasures,” said Dr. Carrie. “Today's investment will help protect the South Okanagan Similkameen Natural Area, which is home to the endangered Burrowing Owl and threatened Lewis's Woodpecker.”

The Government of Canada's Natural Areas Conservation Program is a \$245 million investment to assist non-profit, non-government organizations to secure ecologically sensitive lands to ensure the conservation of our diverse ecosystems, wildlife, and habitat. The NCC has been entrusted to lead the program and has committed to raising matching funds for each federal dollar received. The NCC is the nation's leading land conservation organization, working to protect our most important natural areas and the species they sustain. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect more than 2.6 million acres (over 1 million hectares), coast to coast. More than one quarter of these acres are in British Columbia. [www.natureconservancy.ca/bc](http://www.natureconservancy.ca/bc)

Located south-west of Osoyoos, South Block has been of interest to the conservation community for over 30 years. The land sits in the middle of a migratory corridor for species moving between the desert areas of the western United States and the dry grassland interior of British Columbia. The property is connected to two other parcels purchased by the NCC in 2012. Collectively these lands are known as the Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area. Now spanning more than 3,000 acres (1,200 hectares), this conservation area is a world class refuge for many rare and endangered grassland species.

“This is one of the most significant conservation projects we have undertaken here in BC,” said Linda Hannah, BC Regional Vice President, Nature Conservancy of Canada. “This project will benefit not only the many rare species that rely on this habitat, but also the people who live in and visit this beautiful valley and want to see it remain ecologically vibrant.”

In addition to the federal government, major funding for this project came from the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, The Sitka Foundation, Okanagan Region Wildlife Heritage Fund, The James A. and Donna-Mae Moore Foundation, BC Conservation Foundation, South Okanagan Naturalists' Club, Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society, Oliver-Osoyoos Naturalists Club, Burrowing Owl Winery, Thomas T. Forbes Estate and many individuals

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## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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### Attached Photo:

John Lounds - President and CEO of Nature Conservancy of Canada

Jane Gilbert - Chief Communications officer of Nature Conservancy of Canada

Dr. Colin Carrie - M.P. for Oshawa and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment

Barb Pryce Southern Interior Program director of Nature Conservancy of Canada

Al Martin – Habitata Conservation Trust foundation