



Annual Report 2015-2016

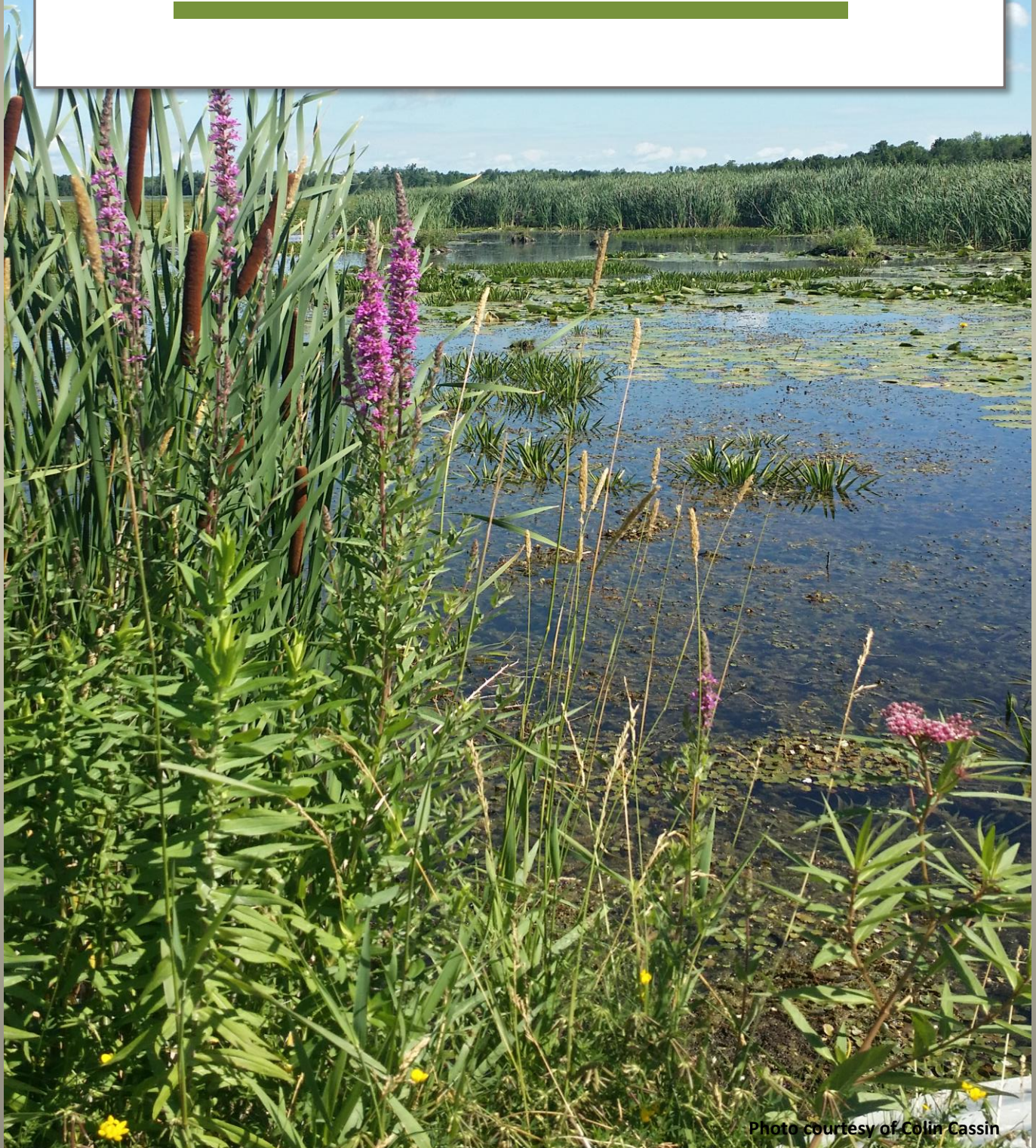


Photo courtesy of Colin Cassin

Annual Report 2015-16



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC)

The OIPC was created to facilitate a coordinated and effective response to the threat of invasive plants by providing leadership, expertise and a forum to educate, motivate and empower organizations and citizens.

In the 2015-2016 (2015-16) fiscal year (April 1 2015 - March 31 2016) the OIPC completed a large number of projects supported by our new and long-standing partners: the Invasive Species Centre (ISC), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (OMNR), the Canadian Council on Invasive Species (CCIS), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) and TD Friends of the Environment (TD). The OIPC Board is a coalition of government, non-government, Indigenous Peoples, and academic institutions and up to four members-at-large voted on to the board from the general membership. The OIPC Board in 2015-16 included:

Board of Directors

Executive Committee

- Iola Price, **OIPC President & Member at Large**
- Ken Towle, **OIPC Vice-President & Conservation Ontario**
- John Urquhart, **OIPC Treasurer & Member at Large**

Voting Directors (one vote per organization)

- Lindsay Barr and Jon Peter, **Royal Botanical Gardens**
- John Benham, **Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association/Wellington County**
- Stephanie Burns, **Forests Ontario**
- Jennifer Gibb and Cara Webster, **City of Toronto**
- Mary Gordon and Michael Farrell, **Hydro One**
- Suzanne Hanna, **Ontario Horticultural Association**
- Erin Mallon, **Ontario Nature**
- Mhairi McFarlane, **Nature Conservancy of Canada**
- Sandy Smith, **University of Toronto**
- Dawn Sucee, **Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters**
- Jeanine West, **Landscape Ontario**
- Owen Williams, **OIPC Past President & Member at Large**
- *Position available*, **Ontario Society for Ecological Restoration**
- *Position available*, **Indigenous representative**

Advisory (non-voting) Directors

- Hugh Berges and Mackenzie Lespérance, **Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs**
- Paula Berketo, **Ontario Ministry of Transportation**
- David Copplestone, **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Biodiversity Policy)**
- Karen Hartley, **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Parks and Protected Areas)**
- Michael Irvine, **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Forest Health and Silviculture)**
- Diana Mooij and Kristina Pauk, **Canadian Food Inspection Agency**
- Prabir Roy, **Parks Canada**

The OIPC consists of just over 200 members and network contacts. OIPC members are drawn from across the province. Members receive discounts on Council events, as well as a newsletter update and they vote for Members at Large and other important items at the OIPC Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Project proposals for the 2015-16 year that were submitted to the ISC, the OMNRF, ECCC, OTF and TD Friends of the Environment were funded; those to Canada Summer Jobs, were not. As well, our AGM was sponsored by Dow AgroSciences, Univar Canada, BASF Canada, Hydro One and Green Stream Lawn and Vegetation Management Inc.

PARTNERSHIPS

The OIPC partners with and is housed at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH). In 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the OFAH was drafted. It is anticipated that the MOU will be reviewed and approved by the OIPC Board of Directors in the fall of 2016.

The OIPC accomplishes its varied and extensive tasks through strong partnerships. Since its inception, the council has worked cooperatively with like-minded organizations as this has proven to be the most effective means to deal with the invasive plant problem.

The OIPC also continued to work with partners across the country by contributing as a board member on the CCIS. The CCIS works collaboratively across jurisdictional boundaries to support actions and information flow to reduce the threat and impacts of invasive species. The national council draws its representation from Indigenous Peoples, Federal and Provincial Government departments and invasive plant/species councils from each province. The OIPC worked with the CCIS to host the National Invasive Alien Species Workshop in February 2016 in Ottawa Ontario.

The OIPC is also a board member of the Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN). MIPN was formed to reduce the impact of invasive plant species in the Midwest region of Canada and the US. MIPN draws its representation from organizations in the US Great Lake states and Ontario.

In early 2015, OIPC partnered with Voyageur Provincial Park on the Ottawa River to assist the park in its ongoing efforts to eradicate invasive water chestnut. In addition to removal of the plant in the park, the staff monitored and removed plants outside the park boundaries and worked to clear five bays of water chestnut using a cutting boat and a mechanical harvester. This year, they also started “pull days”, where members of the public or people staying at the park could assist in monitoring and manual removal, as well as seed collection along the beaches. The project has continued into the spring, summer and fall of 2016.

OIPC COMMITTEES

The OIPC accomplishes a number of projects through its various committees that are open to participation by anyone with an interest in committee initiatives. Each committee works towards its goals and objectives by holding regular meetings to establish and discuss committee priorities and assigns tasks to individual committee members to complete. Over the course of the year, committees assess the work that is required of them and work according to their own schedules. During the 2015-16 fiscal year, seven committees were in place, however, some were more active than others. The committees included:

- Policy
- Communications
- Research and Control
- Horticultural Outreach Collaborative
- Fundraising
- Website
- Ontario *Phragmites* Working Group

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee was created to develop council positions, advise board members and identify gaps in provincial invasive species policy. This committee deals with legislative and policy aspects and issues that address invasive plants. During the 2015-16 fiscal year, the committee became more active, gained some new members, including a new chair, Jennifer Petruniak from Dillon Consulting, focused on developing some new OIPC internal policies and began to revise the committee’s goals and objectives.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee engages the public through education, action and information exchange. In 2015-16, the committee gained a new chair, Alison Morris, from the Invading Species Awareness Program. The committee focused its efforts on some invasive plant-related

campaigns, including one for Thanksgiving encouraging the public to avoid buying or using invasive plants for their decorative wreaths. This post gained a lot of momentum on our social media outlets; the committee will focus its future efforts on more holiday-themed, social media campaigns.

Similar to the Policy Committee, this committee began to focus on developing an action plan for the 2016-17 fiscal year that will include a clear objective and new goals.

Research and Control Committee

The Research and Control Committee identifies invasive plant pathways, priority invasive plants and their impacts, coordinates research and monitoring activities, and assists with the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs). In 2015-16 this committee was co-chaired by Sandy Smith (University of Toronto) and Iola Price (Ottawa Invasive Plant Group). The committee gathered information to answer a number of questions relating to BMPs for a number of invasive plant species. The group also began discussions with the University of Guelph to gauge interest in having students undertake a number of different experiments to further enhance our knowledge regarding invasive plants, how they spread and how to manage them effectively.

Horticulture Outreach Collaborative

The Horticultural Outreach Collaborative works closely with the members of the horticulture industry in order to reduce the sale of invasive plants and inform gardeners and hobby farmers about the impacts of those species. In 2015-16 this committee was chaired by Diana Shermet (Central Lake Ontario Conservation) and Colleen Cirillo (Toronto Botanical Gardens). The committee continued to promote the Grow Me Instead (GMI) Guide and the Nursery Recognition Program (NRP). The committee also received a grant from the TD Friends of the Environment to create bookmarks directing the public to the online GMI guide and to produce seed packets with native plant seeds. These items were extremely popular and over 2500 seed packets and over 5000 bookmarks were distributed at a number of related events including six Seedy Saturdays, Canada Blooms, Go Wild Grow Wild, etc. The committee was also able to use some of the funding from TD Friends of the Environment to update both the northern and southern GMI guides. A number of new alternatives were added to the southern guide, with some additional edits for the northern guide.

The HOC continued with additional initiatives by submitting another application to TD Friends of the Environment to host a tour for landscape and garden professionals, nursery owners and horticulture plant growers. The idea for this tour was based on a similar tour that took place a few years ago. The objective of the tour is to provide professionals working in the horticultural industry with information about successful nurseries selling native plants plus information about the damage that common garden invaders can cause to the environment.

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee works to secure organizational and project funding for the Council's activities. It was inactive in 2015-16, however, OIPC staff focused on obtaining more funding and applying for more grants.

Website Committee

In January of 2016, a Website Committee was formed to facilitate the completion of the website re-design. The committee moved quickly and developed a strong Request for Proposal that outlined extensive information about what the new OIPC website needed to look like. Peterborough Web Design was chosen to complete the website. The new website is now up and running and the OIPC and its members are very pleased with the final product.

Ontario *Phragmites* Working Group (OPWG)

The OPWG was very active during the 2015-16 fiscal year. The main purpose of the OPWG is to facilitate effective, efficient and environmentally responsible management of invasive *Phragmites* in Ontario. Specific goals focus on facilitation of education, information sharing, and investigation and pursuit of effective management tools. Through the OIPC's transfer payment from the MNRF, the OPWG received funding to undertake a number of initiatives including an education and outreach communication strategy for Ontario, updates to the website, two roadside invasive *Phragmites* management workshops, the creation of an informational postcard, a face to face meeting, and a new logo, among others.

PROJECTS

In the 2015-16 fiscal year, the OIPC committees and staff worked on:

National Invasive Alien Species Workshop



Figure 1. National Invasive Alien Species Workshop Discussion

In 2015-16, the CCIS received funding from ECCC to undertake a number of national invasive species initiatives including the development of the second phase of the National Horticulture and Spotters Network Strategies and a National Invasive Alien Species Workshop. The OIPC was largely responsible for coordinating the national workshop, along with other members of the CCIS.

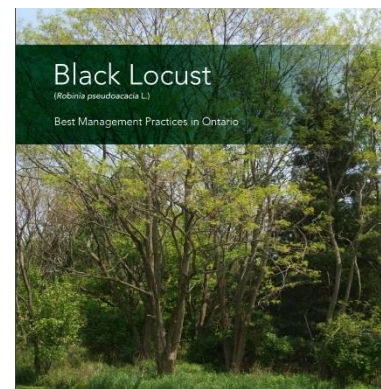
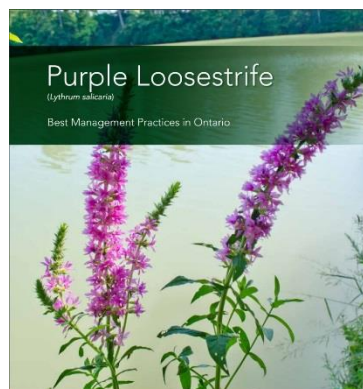
Invasive alien species are a recognized threat to Canada's environment, economy and society. In response to this, *An Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada* was developed in 2004 by federal departments and agencies, provinces and territories to provide a framework to guide actions to address this threat. Since this time, a number of actions have been undertaken by governments, environmental Non-government organizations (NGOs), industry, academia and citizens to help support the prevention, early detection, rapid response and management of invasive species.

To further support the goals of the Strategy, Ministers responsible for Conservation, Wildlife and Biodiversity established a representative federal-provincial-territorial Invasive Alien Species Task Force to identify priority actions to better position Canadian efforts. To ensure a national perspective on priority actions, the Invasive Alien Species Task Force, in partnership with the CCIS, held a national workshop on February 25, 2016 to share perspectives on priorities and potential actions to improve invasive alien species prevention and management in Canada. There were 50 participants including representatives from various levels of government, industry, provincial and territorial invasive species councils, academia and other NGOs. Presentations provided an overview of progress on implementation of the Strategy, and shared the results of jurisdictional scans of federal-provincial-territorial governments, and invasive species councils on key priorities and actions.

Five key themes emerged from the workshop: **the importance of further inter-jurisdictional coordination, the need for increased funding, the importance of stronger education and awareness, the need for enhanced emergency response actions, and the value of facilitating more collaboration and strategic partnerships.** The input obtained from the workshop, will be used as the foundation for future invasive alien species actions. It was clear there was a strong optimism and willingness by organizations represented at the workshop to support the implementation of these goals.

Development of Purple Loosestrife and Black Locust Best Management Practices (BMPs) Documents

Purple loosestrife and black locust pose significant threats to Species at Risk including, but not limited to, white prairie gentian, showy goldenrod, northern map turtle and spotted turtle. Therefore ECCC's Canadian Wildlife Service contracted the OIPC to develop BMPs to provide land owners and land managers with information on how to properly and sustainably manage these invasive plants.



Creating an Invasive Plant Management Strategy: A Framework for Municipalities – Workshops



Figure 2. Midland Invasive Species Strategy Framework Workshop

In 2014-15, the OIPC received funding from the ISC to develop “Creating an Invasive Plant Management Strategy: A Framework for Municipalities”, a how-to guide for municipalities to develop invasive plant management strategies. In 2015-16, the OIPC received further funding from the ISC to promote this document and encourage municipalities to develop invasive plant management strategies through face-to-face workshops. The OIPC held four workshops throughout the province including: Clarington, Sudbury, Peterborough and Midland. The

OIPC worked with its partners in each of these areas to organize the workshop, ensure the appropriate contacts were invited and arrange appropriate case study presentations. The objectives of the workshops were to promote awareness of invasive plant issues within municipalities, highlight the importance of creating an invasive plant management strategy, encourage them to create a strategy, identify useful resources that will assist in creating and implementing a strategy and most importantly, provide them with an opportunity to connect and network with neighbouring municipalities and organizations to encourage collaboration on invasive plant projects, which will assist them in saving valuable time and resources. There were over 200 in attendance for all four workshops.

Invasive Plant Management Webinars

Back by popular demand, through the support of the ISC, we held a total of nine invasive plant management webinars from January to April 2016. The objectives of the webinars were to increase engagement and training of practitioners on how to better control, manage and prevent the spread of invasive plants in Ontario. The webinars are very successful because they utilize online technology to engage and reach a larger audience across the province. In total, we had 488 participants in the webinars.



In addition to our usual management webinars, three of our webinars focused instead on case studies of strategies other non-profit and municipal organizations are using to tackle invasive plants in their area. This included a presentation about managing invasive *Phragmites* in municipal drains, a presentation on grass-roots initiatives on building partnerships to tackle invasive *Phragmites* and a presentation on community engagement in urban greenspaces regarding invasive plant management. These case study presentations proved the most popular of all of our webinars and we will continue to include these types of webinars in the future. See Table 1 for a list of webinar participants.

Table 1: Webinar Participants

Webinar	Number of Participants	Organizations Represented					
		Conservation Authorities	Industry	Non-profit	Academia	Government	Indigenous People
Invasive <i>Phragmites</i> management in municipal drains in the City of Kingsville	38	Central Lake Ontario, Nottawasaga Valley, Grand River, Ganaraska Region	Dougan and Associates, Stantec, Univar, MMM Group, Silvecon, LGL Limited, WSP Group, Eco Medic, Kayanase	Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Oakville Green	N/A	Canadian Wildlife Service, Government of Wisconsin, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, City of Ottawa, Bruce County, Township of Seguin, City of Brampton	Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation
Building Partnerships to deal with Invasive <i>Phragmites</i>: a grass roots perspective	90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Clean Equipment Protocol: Inspecting and Cleaning Equipment for the Purposes of Invasive	55	Conservation Halton, Ganaraska Region, Nottawasaga Valley, Central Lake Ontario	Hydro One, Kayanase, Univar Canada, MMM Group, Industrial Forestry, Dougan and	Royal Botanical Gardens, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative,	N/A	Environment and Climate Change Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Parks Canada, City of London, Greater	N/A

Webinar	Number of Participants	Organizations Represented					
		Conservation Authorities	Industry	Non-profit	Academia	Government	Indigenous People
Species Prevention			Associates, Dillon Consulting	Rare Sites Charitable Research Reserve, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Blazing Star, Urban Forest Associates		Sudbury, County of Renfrew, Bruce County	
Grow Me Instead: Beautiful, non-invasive plants for your gardens	48	Ganaraska Region, Halton Region, Nottawasaga Valley	Ontera, Kayanase, DLHVM, MMM Group, West Wind Forest Stewardship, Enviroscope, Blazing Star Environmental	Royal Botanical Gardens, Heritage North Bay, Natural Impressions	Loyalist College	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, City of Ottawa, Government of Michigan, Greater Sudbury, Town of Richmond Hill	N/A
Wild Parsnip: Best Management Practices	46	Grand River, Ganaraska Region, Credit Valley, Conservation Hamilton	MMM Group, Univar Canada, Clearview, Ripnet, Kayanase, Alternative Land Use Services, Engage Agro, Urban Forest	Nature Conservancy of Canada, Royal Botanical Gardens, Ducks Unlimited	Loyalist College	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, County of Renfrew, City of Hamilton, City of Mississauga, Cape Croker Park, National Capital Commission	Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation

Webinar	Number of Participants	Organizations Represented					
		Conservation Authorities	Industry	Non-profit	Academia	Government	Indigenous People
			Associates, DLHIVM,				
Aquatic Invasive Plant Watch List	48	Central Lake Ontario, Credit Valley, Conservation Halton	MMM Group, Ontera, Ecomedic, Dougan and Associates, DLHIVM, AgLogic, Kayanase, Engage Agro, Urban Forest Associates	Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Ducks Unlimited, Royal Botanical Gardens, Nature Conservancy of Canada	N/A	Environment and Climate Change Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, City of Ottawa, National Capital Commission, Parks Canada, Town of Richmond Hill, Government of Michigan	N/A
Japanese knotweed: Best Management Practices	42	Halton Region, Ganaraska Region, Credit Valley	DLHIVM, Dougan and Associates, Hydro One, Ontera, Univar Canada, Riverstone Environmental, Kayanase, Urban Forest Associates, Baker Forestry Services	Royal Botanical Gardens, Dufferin Museum, Heritage North Bay, Nature Conservancy of Canada		Environment and Climate Change Canada, Northumberland County, National Capital Commission, Town of Richmond Hill	

Webinar	Number of Participants	Organizations Represented					
		Conservation Authorities	Industry	Non-profit	Academia	Government	Indigenous People
Community Engagement in an Urban Greenspace: Stewardship Successes and Struggles in Invasive Species Management	29	Conservation Halton, Central Lake Ontario		Hamilton Nature, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Royal Botanical Gardens, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Buffalo Niagara River Keeper	University of Ottawa	Environment and Climate Change Canada, City of London, City of Hamilton, City of Ottawa, National Capital Commission, City of New Market	

Invasive *Phragmites* Prioritization Tool

Population ID: _____ Date: _____

Location: _____ Observer: _____

GPS Coordinates: _____ Municipality: _____

1. Ecological Criteria

	Value	Score
1. Local Abundance – Is invasive <i>Phragmites</i> locally abundant in the general area (e.g. within 5 kilometers)?		
Virtually absent locally (<10% infested).	10 points	
Moderate to low abundance (10% to 50% infested).	5 points	
Very abundant (>50% of similar habitat is infested).	1 points	
2. Infestation Size – How large is the invasive <i>Phragmites</i> infestation (approximate patch size)?		
Less than 50 m ² .	8 points	
50 m ² to 0.5 ha.	6 points	
0.5 ha acre to 5 ha.	4 points	
Greater than 5 ha.	2 points	

In the winter of 2015, the OIPC held a workshop with the Ontario *Phragmites* Working Group and the MNRF, to further engage those working to tackle invasive *Phragmites* and to obtain feedback on what they need to improve management. One of the top discussion items and requests from the participants was a way to prioritize invasive *Phragmites* infestations, to effectively utilize their management resources.

In response to this, with funding from the ISC, the OIPC developed an Invasive *Phragmites* Prioritization Tool for Ontario. The OIPC obtained permission from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to tailor its already-existing tool for Ontario.

The tool takes the user through a number of criteria including ecological, human values and feasibility and coordination of treatment to rank a minimum of two sites against one another, to determine which site is the most logical to treat. The tool also comes with a user guide, to take the user through a step- by- step How-To, to ensure its proper use.

Invasive *Phragmites* Roadside Best Management Practices and Workshops

Invasive *Phragmites* presents a unique challenge to users and managers of Ontario's roadways. It can rapidly colonize a range of habitat types and site conditions. The negative impacts that invasive *Phragmites* presents along roads and other transportation corridors includes reduced and blocked sightlines, physical damage to asphalt roads from rhizomes, fire hazards from standing dead stalks, and blocked drainage ditches resulting in localized flooding. Invasive *Phragmites* can also be responsible for a range of other socioeconomic impacts including obstructed shoreline access and recreational opportunities, reduced aesthetic enjoyment of natural spaces, and decreases in waterfront property values. Therefore, the OIPC worked with the members of the OPWG to formalize their "smart practices for invasive *Phragmites* roadside management" into one of OIPC's BMP documents. It's important to the OIPC that we involve as many relevant stakeholders as possible in this process to ensure the correct information is provided, therefore we are continuing to work with the MNRF and the MTO to finalize this document.



Figure 3. Invasive *phragmites* roadside BMP workshop Belleville

To further engage those directly involved in roadside management, the OIPC held two workshops, one in Guelph and one in Belleville, with the objective of engaging municipal employees, mostly those employees associated with road maintenance, about invasive *Phragmites* management and to obtain their feedback on *Phragmites* roadside best management practices. The OIPC also provided case studies of what others are doing and information on new roadside management developments. We had a total of 75 participants for both workshops and received very positive feedback.

Invasive *Phragmites* Provincial Education and Outreach Plan

Ontario Phragmites Working Group
Communications Strategy 2016-2017

prepared by Brenda Rooney for the OPWG, 2016



To increase public awareness and engagement about invasive *Phragmites* and how to prevent its spread throughout the province, the OIPC worked with Brenda Rooney, of Rooney Productions, a communication specialist, to develop a provincial education and outreach strategy. The strategy is unique, in that it tries to utilize and build on existing and effective communication avenues including social media, stakeholder websites, press releases and signage. Another key aspect of the strategy is that it targets youth. Youth are an important target as evidence shows if the knowledge is introduced at a young age, there is likely a greater impact for the future. The strategy can be found at www.opwg.ca/resources. The first phase of the strategy will be implemented in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Updates to OPWG website and addition of social media pages

To further support the education and outreach strategy, as well as to maintain a strong, internet presence, the OPWG website was updated and new social media profiles were created. The updates included a transition to a WordPress format, the addition of certain criteria to meet the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, making it mobile friendly and a “Submit your Projects” section. The submit your project section was important because more and more initiatives are being undertaken against *Phragmites* across the province and it is becoming more important than ever to share what others are doing so we can avoid duplication, avoid wasting resources and ensure more effective management of *Phragmites* across the province.

The two new social media profiles created include Facebook and twitter. There are 2.3 billion active social media users to date, out of a world population of 7.3 billion people (brandwatch.com). For non-profits, social media is growing 3 times faster than email. Social media is important for non-profit organizations because it allows them to engage and connect with followers, drive traffic to the website and its content, share content and interesting materials to expose the organization to other people, market the organization and its brand and extend our reach to new audiences. See below for some quick statistics on the OPWG social media:

Twitter

- Followers: 299
- Tweets: 312
- Post likes: 491

Facebook

- 149 Page likes
- Total post reach: 14,246
 - Organic post reach (shows our post through unpaid distribution): 6,792
 - Paid post reach (shows our post as a result of ads): 7,454
- Total post impressions: 23,684
 - Organic post impressions (the number of times our post was displayed, whether clicked or not, through unpaid distribution): 15,794
 - Paid post impressions (the number of times our post was displayed, whether clicked or not, through paid distribution): 7,890
- Engaged users (total clicks): 565
- Negative feedback (post hides): 8

Ontario *Phragmites* Working Group Branding

Even with all of the great work the OPWG does, something was missing! The group needed some branding to go along with their name. So, a small sub-committee was formed to work with two graphic designers to design a new logo and an informational postcard. The informational postcard includes information about the OPWG, as well as information about how to identify, report and prevent the spread of invasive *Phragmites*. This postcard is something members of the OPWG can bring with them to conferences, fairs and other public events to spread the word about the group and invasive *Phragmites*.



Early Detection and Rapid Response Network Ontario (EDRR Network Ontario)



Figure 4. Sheridan College Training Workshop

In early March 2015, the Ontario Trillium Foundation generously awarded \$339,200 to the ISC and the OIPC to establish an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) Network Ontario project. The initiative aims to systematically create, train and equip EDRR networks to provide eyes on the ground to detect, respond to, and control invasive plants and insects in four

pilot areas in Southern and Northern Ontario. The first year of the project was extremely successful. Three formal EDRR open house information sessions and 4 formal EDRR training workshops were held. In addition, EDRR project staff were present at a number of community expos and events (i.e. Outdoor Shows, Seedy Saturdays etc.) to provide information to community members. Over 200 people attended EDRR open houses and training workshops. Each pilot region now has a set of priority species watch lists that have been created with the assistance of local project partners (e.g. municipalities, Conservation Authorities, MNRF, etc.). Volunteers are invited to attend regular (2-4 times/year) training workshops to bring them up to date on encroaching invasive species and upcoming rapid response efforts. A new resource that was created was the EDRR Toolkits, available through a tool-share program in each pilot region. The toolkits include first aid kits, personal protective equipment, BMPS and tools that are often needed for invasive species removal or remediation projects. These kits are available for borrowing in each pilot region.

The overall focus of the first year was to build a network of volunteers who can then assist with more rapid response and removal events, which will be the focus moving into the second year of the project.

9th Annual General Meeting and Invasive Plant Symposium

The OIPC's 2015 AGM and conference was held on October 13-14th in Burlington at the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG). The meeting and conference featured a number of different speakers including Jeremy Downe from the MNRF who discussed the *Invasive Species Act*, Rob Williams from the St. Lawrence-Eastern Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) in New York State who discussed their early detection and rapid response efforts, and Nancy Vidler from the Lambton Shores *Phragmites* Community Group who discussed their grass-roots initiatives in Lambton Shores. It also included two field tours: one of the RBG's natural

lands showcasing invasive plant control work and one of their gardens, showcasing the potential invasive plants they have. Over 90 people were in attendance and at the end of the conference, Eleanor McMahon, MPP of Burlington and then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry came to discuss the *Invasive Species Act* with participants to obtain their feedback and concerns about the Act. The AGM is a great way to connect with those working in the field of invasive plants and to stay up-to date on exciting invasive plant developments and projects. A special thanks goes out to our sponsors as well: BASF Canada, DOW AgroSciences, Engage Agro, Green Stream Lawn and Vegetation Management Inc. and Univar Environmental Services!



Figure 5. OIPC 2015 AGM and Conference

LETTERS/RESPONSES

In 2015-16, the OIPC responded to several policy changes and advocated for invasive plant issues to receive attention and funding. This included comments on the *Conservation Authorities Act* discussion paper. The OIPC works closely with many Conservation Authorities (CAs) in Ontario and we feel it's very important that they are provided with the support and tools they need to continue to facilitate the great invasive species work they are already doing. The OIPC suggested that the *Act* be improved by giving CAs a specific mandate to manage and control invasive species, as CAs generally lack the resources to manage invasives. Properly resourced, CAs, together with MNR staff, regional and municipal staff and the public can work collaboratively on this economic, ecological and social problem. In this regard, we suggested that the province work to increase the CAs core funding. This is especially needed in those areas where the population base is small but the land base is large and often composed of vulnerable ecosystems in which the movement of invasive plants might not be noticed.

We also provided comments on Ontario's Draft Pollinator Health Action Plan. An important component of the plan that was missing was the associated impacts that invasive plants have on pollinator health and what can be done to mitigate these impacts. We suggested that this be highlighted in the final version of the Pollinator Health Action Plan and that the plan mention the passing of Ontario's *Invasive Species Act* of 2015 as an important tool in both the management and control of invasive plant species and as a tool to promote pollinator health. We also suggested including information about the impacts of invasive plants on pollinators such as the ability to alter the community composition of natural habitats, reducing food and shelter available for all species of wildlife, including pollinators.

One of our most important responses was in regards to the *Invasive Species Act*. Our President, Iola Price, was invited to speak at the Standing Committee on Social Policy on September 29, 2015. The Standing Committee process occurs before an *Act* is passed, to hear from the public regarding possible amendments to the *Act* before it becomes law. Some of our concerns that were raised at the hearing included that the *Act* does little to engage the majority of Ontario's organizations that have direct interest in controlling invasive species and also does little to provide them with the tools they need to undertake management. As a recommendation, we suggested engaging one or more partners to develop six to 10 regional scale plans generically describing how to deal with large infestations. Another concern was the lack of information on how invasive species were going to be listed as Prohibited or Restricted. Therefore, we emphasized the need for a rigorous science-based assessment process. The OIPC recognizes the amazing management work being done by so many of our partners, therefore, we also suggested that those groups were exempt from any required authorizations to move invasive species for disposal or other required purposes. The *Act* received Royal Assent on November 3, 2015, and will come into effect November 3, 2016. The OIPC looks forward to working with the MNRF on invasive plant issues and to assist, where we can, with the implementation of the *Act*.

COMMUNICATIONS

The OIPC attended and partnered in a variety of events, conducted interviews and distributed radio and print public service announcements, media releases and articles during the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Events

In 2015-16, the OIPC reached approximately 19, 857 people through attendance at events, presentations and workshops. OIPC has become a well-known and respected name in the horticultural world, and we are often invited to provide presentations for Master Gardening and Horticultural Clubs. We also partner with a number of other organizations to provide invasive plant identification and control workshops.

For a full list of events that the OIPC attended, please see Table 2.

Table 2: Events, Presentations and Workshops attended in 2015-16

Name	Attendance	Location	Date
Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Annual Wildlife and Game Conference (Booth)	110	Toronto	April 2015
Carolinian Canada Coalition Go Wild Grow Wild Event (Booth)	2,000	London	April-18-2015
National Capital Commission - Invasive Species Forum (Booth)	100	Ottawa	April-25-2016
Biodiversity Summit (Booth)	N/A	Niagara Falls	May-15-2015
Coldwater Horticultural Society Presentation	20	Coldwater	May-21-2015
Manotick Gardeners Presentation	20	Manotick	May-25-2015
Natural Heritage Education Program (Ontario Parks) (Booth)	120	Orillia	May-26-2015
Garlic Mustard Pull with the Invading Species Awareness Program	15	Lindsay	May-26-2015
Happy Valley Forest Meeting	15	King City	May-27-2015
Kenner High school Presentation	15	Peterborough	June-04-2015
Garden Bloggers Fling 2015 (tour and presentation with City of Toronto)	80	High Park	June-05-2015
		Pulaski, New	
Selkirk Shores Symposium (Presentation on Clean Equipment Protocol)	90	York	June-10-2015
EDRR Open House	27	Sault Ste. Marie	June-15-2015
EDRR Open House	15	Thunder Bay	June-17-2015
EDRR Open House	23	Georgetown	June-25-2015
Bonnechere Provincial Park Invasive Species Day (booth)	20	Bonnechere PP	July 21 2015
Children's Nature Camp	15	Ottawa	August 15 2015
Oakville Horticultural Society Presentation	55	Oakville	September-14-2015
EDRR Professional Training Workshop	32	Georgetown	September-18-2015
EDRR Public Training Workshop	30	Georgetown	September-19-2015
EDRR Training Workshop	30	Sault Ste. Marie	September-22-2015
EDRR Training Workshop	30	Thunder Bay	September-29-2015
NOFNEC Meeting & Trade Show (EDRR)	25	Thunder Bay	September-30-2015
Regional Forest Health Network Invasive Species Workshop	27	Ottawa	October-01-2015
Muskoka Conservancy Presentation	N/A	Huntsville	October-02-2015
OIPC Annual General Meeting and Conference	91	Burlington	October-14-2015
Georgetown District High School Invasive Species Guest Lecture x4 classes (EDRR)	108	Georgetown	October-22-2015
Happy Valley Forest Workshop via the Nature Conservancy of Canada (EDRR)	18	King City	October-24-2015

Name	Attendance	Location	Date
Ganaraska Forest Centre Municipal Framework Workshop	46	Port Hope	November-06-2015
Hamilton Naturalist Club Presentation	60	Hamilton	November-16-2015
Wild Parsnip Stakeholders' Meeting	15	Ottawa	November 26 2015
Land Improvement Contractors of Ontario Convention Presentation	40	London	January-21-2016
Fleming College Presentation	28	Lindsay	January-25-2016
University of Guelph Presentation	9	Guelph	February-04-2016
Kawartha Farm Stewardship Collaborative event (booth)	50	Peterborough	February-06-2016
Ennismore Horticultural Society Presentation	30	Peterborough	February-18-2016
National Invasive Alien Species Workshop (host)	50	Ottawa	February-25-2016
Seedy Saturday via the Toronto Botanical Gardens	600	Toronto	February-27-2016
Seedy Saturday	50	Thunder Bay	February-27-2016
			February 16 to 28
Central Canada Outdoor Show (EDRR-CC)	15,500	Thunder Bay	2016
Day in the Garden via Sean James	120	Guelph	February
Milton Seedy Saturday via Sean James	20	Milton	March 2 2016
Sharing Experiences Workshop Presentation	85	Guelph	March-05-2016
Sudbury Framework Workshop	50	Sudbury	March 10 2016
Sheridan College Staff Lunch 'N' Learn (EDRR-CC)	18	Oakville	March-15-2016
East Gwillimbury Grow Me Instead Presentation	55	Mount Albert	March-15-2016
Brampton Seedy Saturday	N/A	Brampton	March-19-2016
TOTAL	~19,857		

Social media/newsletter

The OIPC continues to distribute updates to a network of over 200 individuals, who receive information about invasive plant research, control projects, educational material, job postings, conferences, etc., that are being conducted across the province. The growth in our followers on social media has increased substantially over the last fiscal year.

The OIPC provides updates to followers through the OIPC Twitter page www.twitter.com/OIPC1. Our Twitter followers have increased from 1,105 on April 1, 2015 to approximately 1,367 March 31, 2016 - an increase of 262 followers!

OIPC also has a Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/ontarioinvasiveplantcouncil>. On April 1, 2015 the OIPC Facebook account had 836 “likes” compared to 1,271 on March 31, 2016, that’s an increase of 435 “likes”!

OIPC reached a number of Ontarians in 2015-16 through media. Radio and print media staff were interested in talking to OIPC about various invasive plants, such as wild parsnip, and nursery plants. For a list of the media opportunities in which OIPC was involved, please see Table 3.

Table 3: Media Events 2015-16

Name	Date	Featured
Landscape Ontario	March 4 2015	Grow Me Instead
Sault Online	April 7 2015	EDRR
SooToday	April 7 2015	EDRR
Sault Star	April 7 2015	EDRR
CTV Northern Ontario	June 15 2015	EDRR
Ontario Gardener		Grow Me Instead Advertisement
CHEX News	July 23 2015	Wild Parsnip Interview
Benzinga	August 26 2015	EDRR
Hamilton Spectator	November 25 2015	RBG fight against honeysuckle with support of OIPC
Midland Mirror	November 28 2015	Municipal framework workshop
Muskoka Watershed Council Newsletter	December 1 2015	Municipal framework workshop
Sustainable Severn Sound Newsletter	December 21 2015	Municipal framework workshop

OIPC Website

Analytics Overview 2015-2016 Fiscal Year

The OIPC website provides users with up-to-date information including downloadable educational materials, strategic documents, an events calendar, links to other invasive plant sites, Board activity notes and more.

Overview Comparing April 2014 – March 2015 to April 2015 – March 2016

The following is a brief overview of the OIPC's website statistics for April 1st 2015 through March 31st 2016 (compared to the same time period of the previous year: April 1st 2014 to March 31st 2015).

Sessions

Sessions are defined as a group of interactions one user takes within a given time frame on the website. In our 2015-16 fiscal year, our sessions we're up by 5.72% (from 18,031 to 19,083).

Users

Users are defined as someone that has had at least one session and this includes new and old users. Our users increased by 3.31% (13, 656 from 13,218). This is encouraging and we expect this to be much higher next year with the launch of our new and more user-friendly website.

Time Spent on Our Site

Unfortunately, we had a decrease in the time spent on our website (2.19 minutes to 2.11). This was most likely a result of our outdated website, resulting in difficult to be able to find the information the user was looking for. As mentioned above, we hope for an increase next year due to our new website.

Bounce Rate

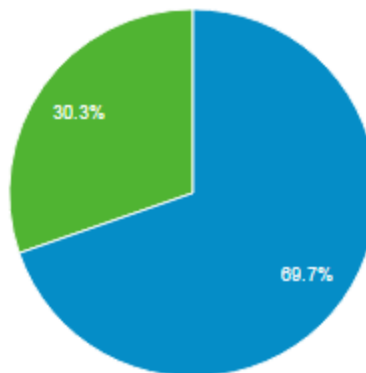
The bounce rate is defined as the percentage of visitors to a particular website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page. It's suggested that a 50% bounce rate is to be expected and our bounce rate actually went down (58.37% to 56%).

Returning and New Visitors

In regards to returning visitors, we are retaining them as we saw an increase in returning visitors (29% to 30%), but unfortunately, that means the number of new visitors decreased (71.2% to 69.7%).

■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

Apr 1, 2015 - Mar 31, 2016



Apr 1, 2014 - Mar 31, 2015

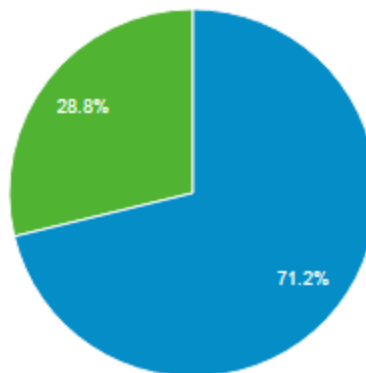


Figure 6. New versus returning visitors

Who is coming to our site?

The geographic location of our audience remains constant with the most visits (95%) coming from Canada, followed by 2.61% of visitors from the United States and the remainder from Brazil, India, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, France, Ukraine and Australia.

How are visitors coming to our site?

Organic searching (a method for entering one or more search items into a search engine) remains the main avenue (54.9%) for how people visit our site. Most key words used include: Ontario invasive plant council, invasive species in Ontario, invasive plants in Ontario, Ontario invasive plants, oipc, invasive plants, Ontario invasive species and grow me instead. 20.93% percent of our visitors visit by directly typing our URL into the search engine and 20.30% of our visitors are referred from other websites that have our links on their own website.

What pages are people viewing?

The top landing pages (pages that visitors enter our site through) include:

- The homepage
- Gardeners and horticulturalists
- Publications
- BMP library

THE FUTURE OF THE OIPC

The OIPC will continue to grow in 2016-17 and pursue its goals of managing invasive plants in a collaborative and effective manner.

One of the most important tasks the OIPC plans to complete is a review of its strategic plan, vision and mandate by surveying members and partner organizations about how the OIPC is doing, what it can improve on, projects we need to focus on and whether or not its focus needs to shift. However, until then, we will continue to provide important information regarding invasive plants identification and control through our very popular webinars and BMPs, including updates to all of our BMPs, to ensure we are providing the most relevant information.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2015-16

Due to unforeseen delays, the 2015-2016 Financial Summary was not available at time of printing. When received, it will be inserted here and a revised Annual Report will be posted to our website www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca.

SPONSORS

The OIPC received financial support in 2015-16 from the following organizations:



Catalyst for research and response



Partners in Powerful Communities



Thank you to all of our sponsors, members and partners!
Your continued support is the key to our success!
We could not do it without you!

