

February 19, 2010

Re: **Letter of Inquiry – Night Sky Conservation Program**

Dear Sir or Madam,

For over 40 years the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVC) has assumed a leadership role in the conservation, enhancement and management of the Mississippi River watershed through watershed planning, integrated resource management, conservation education and stewardship efforts.

One excellent example of MVC's commitment to conservation education within the community is the Night Sky Conservation (NSC) Program. This innovative education program is driven by the conviction that the most effective method of reducing light pollution is to educate the public about the wonders of the night sky in order to demonstrate what will be lost if light pollution is allowed to continue unabated.

The Night Sky Conservation program utilizes four distinct methods of education:

- **Good Neighbour Lighting:** an awareness program aimed at educating the public about practical lighting alternatives;
- **Night Sky Tours:** free public stargazing parties;
- **Astronomy Courses:** high-calibre 10 week programs featuring the constellations, telescopes, astronomical cameras, the basics of light pollution and clarifying interesting media reports concerning the science of astronomy; and
- **Monthly Astronomy Articles:** currently featured in the community newspaper.

MVC is involved in the NSC education program because its largest conservation area, the Mill of Kintail, is home to the Fred Lossing Observatory (FLO), which is owned by the Ottawa chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC). MVC delivers programs that balance the needs of the community with the needs of the night-sky environment in order to maintain FLO as a first-rate astronomical observatory.

The local municipality, Mississippi Mills, recently enacted a light pollution restriction by-law (03-62) to limit the amount of artificial light being directed into the night sky. MVC supported this by-law through good neighbour lighting demonstrations and astronomy education comprising of literature, astronomy courses and stargazing parties at the Mill of Kintail Conservation Area. These individual efforts were amalgamated into the Night Sky Conservation program at the beginning of the International Year of Astronomy in 2009.

Night Sky Conservation is a groundbreaking conservation education program facilitated and coordinated by highly respected scientists and astronomy enthusiasts. The NSC Coordinator, Michael A. Earl, is an accomplished astronomer who is a lifetime member of the Ottawa RASC. Mr. Earl constructed Canada's first remotely controlled and automated satellite tracking facility and he recently made history by being the first Canadian to detect and track over 3,100 of our Earth orbiting satellites. Mr. Earl also founded the first privately owned satellite tracking business in Canada: Canadian Astronomy, Satellite Tracking and Optical Research (CASTOR).

MVC has strong partnerships with its member municipalities and other community groups. As a result, the NSC program has the potential to become a blueprint for night sky conservation programs in other conservation areas, provincial parks and other public recreational sites across Ontario.

Since its inception, the Night Sky Conservation program has been very successful. However, private funding for the program has run out. We ask your institution to accept this letter of inquiry for a grant to MVC in the amount of \$5,000. This contribution will assist in the continuation of the Night Sky Conservation program's quality leadership for light pollution abatement, night sky appreciation and education.

Your institution will be credited with assisting in light pollution abatement efforts of the Night Sky Conservation program on the official NSC web site, any communications and on-site signage. We appreciate your generous grant programs enabling non-profit organizations such as MVC to enhance their communities and reach their respective goals.

This letter is only a summary of our proposal. If you have any questions, concerns, or require more detailed information about the NSC, please feel free to contact me at 613-791-0413, 613-340-4861 or [mikeearl@castor2.ca](mailto:mikeearl@castor2.ca). I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael A. Earl  
Coordinator  
Night Sky Conservation

**MVC BN / Charitable Registration Number: 107707440RR0001**

For more information concerning the NSC and our partner groups, please visit:

**[www.castor2.ca/nsc](http://www.castor2.ca/nsc)**  
**[www.castor2.ca](http://www.castor2.ca)**  
**[www.mvc.on.ca](http://www.mvc.on.ca)**  
**[www.mississippimills.ca](http://www.mississippimills.ca)**  
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