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Implicit in all these promises is a recognition of the great importance of the water recharge function of formations like the Oak Ridges moraine. If the green plan is official government policy then one must conclude that the government accepts the fact that it has responsibility to act in protecting our water resources.

However, quite apart from the recognition of the technical responsibility, a more important issue is the government's moral responsibility to protect the environment. A government's first responsibility is to protect the quality of life of those it governs. Our governments fulfil that responsibility by maintaining police forces, a judicial system, a national health care system and a variety of other programs aimed at improving our standard of living. Increasingly, Canadians are demanding that their governments also involve themselves in protecting the environment.

Again referring to the green plan, it is clear that the federal government recognizes that it has a moral obligation in this area. As the government states in the introduction: "Our health and the environment are inseparable". It also says "Canada's goal is to ensure that citizens today and tomorrow have the clean air, water and land essential to sustaining human health and the environment." It is obvious, therefore, that the responsibility to act exists. If we accept that the green plan is sincere and legitimate and not 174 pages of empty posturing, then we can say that the willingness to act also exists.

But how to act, and in what capacity? The government, well intentioned, may sincerely want to act, but what means does it have to get involved in the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine? Fortunately, a number of mechanisms exist that would allow the federal government to involve itself along the lines put forward in my motion.

For example, section 4 of the Canada Water Act reads:

For the purpose of facilitating the formulation of policies and programs with respect to the water resources of Canada and to ensure the optimum use of those resources for the benefit of all Canadians, the Minister may enter into an arrangement with one or

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more provincial governments to establish intergovernmental committees or other bodies: to maintain continuing consultation on water resources matters and to advise on priorities for research, planning, conservation development and utilization relating thereto; to advise on the formulation of water policies and programs; and to facilitate the co-ordination and implementation of water policies and programs.

If that is not a blueprint for government action in protecting the Oak Ridges moraine, I do not know what is.

One of the reasons why the Canada Water Act was introduced is that "pollution of the water resources of Canada is a significant and rapidly increasing threat to the health, well-being and prosperity of the people of Canada". There is no better example of that threat than the damage being done to the Oak Ridges moraine. As I stated earlier, the area's rapidly expanding population and such activities as construction, mining and agriculture are slowly leading to the disintegration of the moraine. This wonder of nature which is so intrinsically linked to the survival of numerous ecosystems throughout south central Ontario is badly in need of protection.

Aside from the Canada Water Act, the federal government could also use the Fisheries Act and the National Parks Act. The stated policy of the Fisheries Act is "no net loss of habitat". Under the act, the minister is authorized to set aside certain bodies of water for special protection. Because Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for implementing the legislation, it provides an excellent opportunity for the two levels of government to work together to protect the moraine.

The National Parks Act could also be used to protect this national treasure. The 1976 Task Force on Park Establishment found that Canada, with less than 3 per cent of its area in national parks and other protected designations, is a follower instead of a leader on the question of parks. As its report stated: "because of our size, our failure is globally significant".

This is an opportunity for the Canadian heritage parks initiative to narrow that gap by recognizing the cultural and natural heritage value of the entire Oak Ridges moraine and by forming a working committee to look into establishing new parks in the area.