



Village of Point Edward

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December 5, 2025

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
Email: todd.mccarthy@pc.ola.org

Minister McCarthy,

On behalf of the Village of Point Edward, I am writing to express significant concerns regarding the proposed changes in Bill 68 (Schedule 3), which would dissolve Ontario's existing conservation authorities and replace them with seven large regional bodies governed under a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency. As a waterfront community located at the head of the St. Clair River and along the shores of Lake Huron, Point Edward relies heavily on locally informed watershed management, responsive environmental oversight, and strong municipal partnerships.

The Conservation Authorities Act (1946) has long empowered municipalities to create conservation authorities tailored to local needs. When municipalities choose to form these authorities, they also assume governance responsibilities and fund operations through appointed Boards of Directors and annual levies. This model has given municipalities—large and small—the ability to be accountable for local environmental management.

Within our region, 17 municipalities came together in 1961 to form the Sydenham Valley Conservation Authority, which later expanded into the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) in 1974. For decades, SCRCA has provided watershed-based expertise rooted in the unique environmental characteristics of the St. Clair River, Lake Huron, and surrounding tributaries. Currently, local municipalities contribute approximately 27% of SCRCA's funding, while the Province contributes only about 3%, demonstrating the strong municipal commitment to protecting regional watersheds and public safety.

Locally governed conservation authorities such as SCRCA have delivered programs and services tailored to the needs of their communities, maintaining predictable levy structures and service levels for ratepayers. These supports—from flood forecasting to risk management, shoreline assessments, natural heritage protection, and conservation land stewardship—are

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vital to a waterfront municipality like the Village of Point Edward, where local knowledge and rapid response capabilities are fundamental.

Bill 68's proposed consolidation into a new Lake Erie Region Conservation Authority—with 81 municipalities—raises serious concerns about the loss of local representation, reduced responsiveness, and weakened understanding of watershed-specific conditions. Regionalization on this scale risks diminishing the specialized knowledge required to protect Lake Huron's shoreline dynamics, the St. Clair River's flow characteristics, and the local flood and erosion risks unique to our area. Larger geographic authorities may also reduce the accessibility of staff and decision-makers, resulting in slower responses at times when municipalities require immediate technical support.

Additionally, conservation authorities collectively own and manage thousands of acres of land, much of it gifted by local residents with the understanding that these lands would be protected and stewarded by local boards who understand their historical, cultural, and ecological value. Centralizing decision-making under a distant Crown corporation undermines that long-standing public trust.

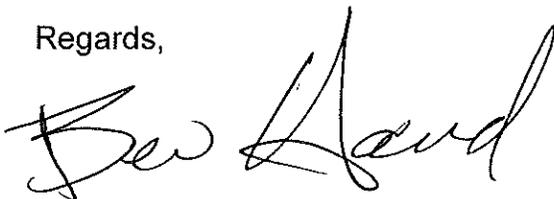
While the Village of Point Edward supports the Province's goals of improving consistency in permit approvals, expanding shared services, and advancing digital modernization, we do not support the creation of a top-down governance structure that weakens municipal oversight. Such a system risks adding new layers of bureaucracy, cost, and red tape without ensuring improved outcomes for communities or watersheds.

We encourage the Province to work collaboratively with municipalities and existing conservation authorities to determine appropriate levels of strategic consolidation—where needed—while preserving local governance, accountability, and watershed-specific expertise. A balanced approach would allow Ontario to achieve its objectives for consistency and efficiency without compromising the strength of locally informed environmental management.

Given the importance of the St. Clair River, Lake Huron, and surrounding watersheds to the Village of Point Edward, we respectfully request that the Province maintain Ontario's current model of independent, watershed-based, municipally governed conservation authorities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. A copy of this letter will also be shared with our local MP and MPP, as well as the County of Lambton, SCRCA, Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bev Hand". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Bev Hand, Mayor
Village of Point Edward

cc. Marilyn Gladu, MP Sarnia-Lambton-Bkejwanong
Bob Bailey, MPP Sarnia-Lambton
Greg Grimes, Deputy Mayor and SCRCA Chair
Arianna Noctor, Councillor; Paul Burgess, Councillor; Tim Mondoux, Councillor
Jim Burns, Chief Administrative Officer
Ken Phillips, SCRCA General Manager
Kristen Rodriques, SCRCA Vice-Chair
Kevin Marriott, County of Lambton Warden
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA)