



Yvonne Hamlin, Mayor

97 Hurontario Street, Box 157

Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z5

705-445-1030 ext. 8000

yhamlin@collingwood.ca

officeofthemayor@collingwood.ca

19 December 2025

Premier Doug Ford

RE: Opposition to the Proposed Conservation Authority Restructuring

Dear Premier Doug Ford,

On behalf of the Town of Collingwood Council, I am writing to provide our formal response to Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 regarding the proposed restructuring of Ontario's conservation authorities.

The Conservation Authorities Act (1946) enables municipalities to establish local conservation authorities and assume responsibility for governance and funding through the appointment of a Board of Directors and the provision of an annual levy. Municipalities collectively provide between 25% and 50% of total conservation authority funding, while the Province contributes approximately 3%.

Conservation authorities collectively own and manage thousands of hectares of land, much of which was donated by local residents and entrusted to these authorities as a personal legacy for long-term protection, stewardship, and the public good. These lands were given with the expectation that they would be cared for by locally governed conservation authorities that understand the unique needs of their watersheds and communities.

The Ministry's proposal to reduce Ontario's 36 conservation authorities to seven regional entities, including the creation of an Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, represents a significant restructuring. Under this plan, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) would be merged into a new "Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority" along with six other authorities, forming a single organization stretching from Thunder Bay and Lake Superior through northern Lake Huron, Simcoe, Dufferin, Bruce, and Grey counties, York Region, Kawartha Lakes, and Durham Region.

While we acknowledge and support the Province’s goals of improved efficiency, consistency, and fiscal prudence, the proposed “Huron–Superior” configuration raises serious concerns. It would create a geographically vast and administratively complex entity encompassing 78+ municipalities with little shared watershed connection or economic alignment. This structure risks diluting local accountability and municipal partnership, contrary to the principle that decisions are best made closest to the communities they affect.

Further, the transition would generate substantial costs—including human resources integration, governance restructuring, IT migration, and policy harmonization—that would divert resources from front-line service delivery and delay measurable outcomes. These impacts run counter to the Province’s own business-planning principles of value for money, cost containment, and service continuity.

The proposed model also risks greater uncertainty and delays for builders, developers, and farmers, as local permitting offices and staff familiar with site conditions are replaced by distant regional structures. This would make it harder for applicants to obtain timely advice, resolve issues, or expedite housing and infrastructure approvals, undermining the Province’s “Get It Done” agenda.

It is important to note that Conservation Authorities like the NVCA and GSCA continue to strive to achieve efficiencies and pivot processes in response to Provincial legislative changes. As examples, the NVCA has already undertaken significant modernization work aligned with provincial objectives, including implementing a digital permitting and inspection system that has reduced turnaround times, adopting shared-service arrangements in corporate services, conducting independent service reviews to identify cost recovery opportunities, and improving transparency and client communication. These efforts demonstrate that meaningful modernization can occur within the current watershed-based governance framework.

Additionally, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority operates under the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, a unique legislative framework requiring distinct governance and reporting. Similarly, the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority serves Northern Ontario communities facing vastly different climatic, hydrological, and infrastructure realities, which would be ill-served by a single administrative structure extending to the Greater Toronto Area and physically based over 1,400 km away.

If the Province proceeds with reducing the number of conservation authorities, we believe a more geographically coherent and fiscally responsible alternative would be to consolidate only those authorities with contiguous watersheds draining to Georgian Bay, while maintaining the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority as a distinct entity and forming a Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority to reflect its unique regional context. Please find attached the resolution approved by Collingwood Council outlining our position and recommendations.

Thank you for considering our input on this important matter. We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure effective watershed management and service continuity for our communities.

Yours truly,



Yvonne Hamlin
Mayor, Town of Collingwood

Enclosed (1)

cc. Council, Town of Collingwood

Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Brian Saunderson, MPP – Simcoe-Grey

Hon. Sylvia Jones, MPP – Dufferin-Caledon

Hon. Andrea Khanjin, MPP – Barrie-Innisfil

Hon. Caroline Mulroney, MPP – York-Simcoe

Hon. Doug Downey, MPP – Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte

Hon. Jill Dunlop, MPP – Simcoe North

Hon. Kevin Holland, MPP – Thunder Bay-Atikokan

Hon. Laurie Scott, MPP – Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock

Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP – Huron-Bruce

Hon. Peter BethelInfalvy, MPP – Pickering-Uxbridge

Matthew Rae, MPP – Perth-Wellington

Paul Vickers, MPP - Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound

Steve Pinsonneault, MPP – Lambton-Kent-Middlesex

Simcoe County

Association of Municipalities of Ontario

Conservation Ontario

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

Grey Sauble Conservation Authority

Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority

Lakehead Region Conservation Authority

Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority
Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority

December 19, 2025

At its meeting held on December 15, 2025, the Council of the Town of Collingwood passed the following resolution in opposition of the proposed Conservation Authority restructuring:

WHEREAS municipalities fund and govern conservation authorities under the Conservation Authorities Act;

WHEREAS the Province proposes consolidating 36 conservation authorities into 7 regional entities, including merging NVCA into a “Huron–Superior Regional Conservation Authority” spanning 78+ municipalities;

WHEREAS this configuration would create a geographically vast, administratively complex entity, dilute local accountability, and impose significant transition costs, delaying service delivery and housing approvals;

WHEREAS NVCA has already implemented modernization measures aligned with provincial objectives within the current watershed-based governance model;

WHEREAS the Town of Collingwood is currently served by two conservation authorities—the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority and the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority—both of which would be negatively impacted by the proposed changes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT The Town of Collingwood does not support the proposed “Huron–Superior Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 and does not believe amalgamation is required;

AND THAT the Town endorses further provincial evaluation of a more geographically coherent, cost-effective, and locally accountable watershed-based management model that advances the government’s priorities of efficiency, red-tape reduction, and timely housing delivery;

AND THAT The Town requests that the Ministry engage directly with all affected municipalities and conservation authorities before finalizing any consolidation boundaries or legislative amendments;

AND FURTHER THAT this resolution, with a letter from the Mayor, be forwarded to the Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; MPP Saunderson; Simcoe County, AMO, Conservation Ontario, All MPPs within the proposed Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority, and the Boards of the Nottawasaga Valley, Grey Sauble, Saugeen Valley, Maitland Valley, Ausable Bayfield, Lake Simcoe Region, and Lakehead Region Conservation Authorities.

If you require any further information with respect to this resolution, please contact clerk@collingwood.ca.