



Attachment 1 of 2: NVCA Board Resolution

Discussion on NVCA Boards position on Provincial Conservation Authority changes

Recommendation:

RES: 83-25

Moved by: Cllr. Ralph Manktelow

Seconded by: Cllr. Joel Loughhead

WHEREAS: the Conservation Authorities Act (1946) enables municipalities to establish local conservation authorities (CA), and when municipalities choose to form such authorities, they assume responsibility for governance and funding through the appointment of a Board of Directors and the provision of an annual levy to cover expenses; and

WHEREAS: local municipalities collectively currently provide between 25% and 50% of total conservation authority funding, while the Province of Ontario provides approximately 3%; and

WHEREAS: conservation authorities collectively own and manage thousands of hectares of land, much of which was donated by local residents and entrusted to conservation authorities as a personal legacy for long-term protection, stewardship, and the public good, with the expectation that such lands would be cared for by locally governed conservation authorities; and

WHEREAS: the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has posted Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 ("Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities"), proposing to reduce Ontario's 36 conservation authorities to 7 regional entities as part of a broader restructuring that would create an Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized oversight and direction under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, with a municipal cost apportionment yet to be defined; and

WHEREAS: under this proposal, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) would be merged into a new "Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority" together with the:

1. Ausable Bayfield CA;
2. Maitland Valley CA;
3. Saugeen Valley CA;
4. Grey Sauble CA;
5. Lake Simcoe Region CA; and
6. Lakehead Region CA

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 regions; and

WHEREAS: the Board acknowledges and supports the Province's goals of improved efficiency, consistency and fiscal prudence in conservation delivery, but finds that the proposed "Huron-Superior" configuration would:

1. Create a geographically vast and administratively complex entity of 78+ different municipalities joining Northern, rural and fast-growing southern municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area with little shared watershed connection or economic alignment;
2. Dilute local accountability and municipal partnership, contrary to the principle that decisions are best made closest to the communities they affect;
3. Generate substantial transition 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, contrary to the Province's own business-planning principles of value for money, cost containment and service continuity; and
4. Risk greater uncertainty and delay for builders, developers and farmers, as local permitting offices and staff familiar with site conditions are replaced by distant regional structures, making it harder for applicants to obtain timely advice, resolve issues or expedite housing and infrastructure approvals that support the Province's "Get It Done" agenda; and

WHEREAS: the NVCA has already undertaken significant modernization work aligned with provincial objectives that demonstrates meaningful modernization can occur within the current watershed-based governance framework, including:

- implementation of a digital permitting and inspection system that has reduced turnaround times;
- adoption of shared-service arrangements in Corporate Services;
- independent service reviews identifying opportunities for cost recovery and efficiency; and
- measurable improvements in transparency and client communication; and

WHEREAS: the Board notes that 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; and

WHEREAS: the Board further recognizes that 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: and

WHEREAS: if the Province proceeds with reducing the number of conservation authorities, the Board believes a more geographically coherent and fiscally responsible alternative would be to consolidate only those conservation authorities with contiguous watersheds draining to Georgian Bay while maintaining the Lake Simcoe Region CA as distinct entity in recognition of its unique legislative

framework and having Lakehead Region CA form the Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority reflecting its unique regional context;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Board of Directors does not believe that the amalgamation is required and does not support the proposed "Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority" boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257; and
2. The Board instead endorses further provincial evaluation of a more focused specific model that is a more geographically coherent, cost-effective, and locally accountable alternative to advance the government's priorities of efficiency, red-tape reduction and timely housing delivery; and
3. The Board requests that the Ministry engage directly with the 78+ affected municipalities and conservation authorities across Simcoe, York, Durham, Kawartha Lakes, Bruce, Huron, Dufferin, Grey, Lambton, and Northern Ontario before finalizing any consolidation boundaries or legislative amendments; and
4. That this resolution, with a letter from the Chair, be forwarded to the Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations and to:
 - the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and his Opposition critics;
 - local Members of Provincial Parliament;
 - the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Conservation Ontario; and
 - the Boards of the Grey Sauble, Saugeen Valley, Maitland Valley, Ausable Bayfield, Lake Simcoe Region and Lakehead Region Conservation Authorities.
5. Staff be directed to prepare NVCA's formal response to Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257.
 - The response shall reflect NVCA's position on maintaining effective watershed-based management, local accountability, and service continuity for member municipalities and stakeholders.
 - Staff shall submit the finalized response to the Environmental Registry of Ontario by the stated deadline and circulate a copy to the Board for information.

Carried;