



**Meeting Date:** December 17, 2025

**Prepared By:** Stephanie Bergman, Manager of Planning and Development

**Submitted by:** Rob Cascaden, P. Eng, Director of Public Works and Engineering

**Report No:** PWE-65-2025

**Subject:** Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Input on Proposed Conservation Authority Amalgamation

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**Recommendation:**

THAT Report PWE-65-2025 re: Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Input on Proposed Conservation Authority Amalgamation be received;

AND THAT staff be directed to submit the correspondence in Attachment 1 to Environmental Registry of Ontario posting 025-1257 regarding Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities;

AND THAT the Council of the Municipality of Middlesex Centre endorses and passes the draft municipal resolution in Attachment 2 regarding the proposed amalgamation of Ontario Conservation Authorities.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council an overview of staff comments on the province's proposal to amalgamate the existing thirty-six (36) Conservation Authorities (CAs) into seven (7).

**Background:**

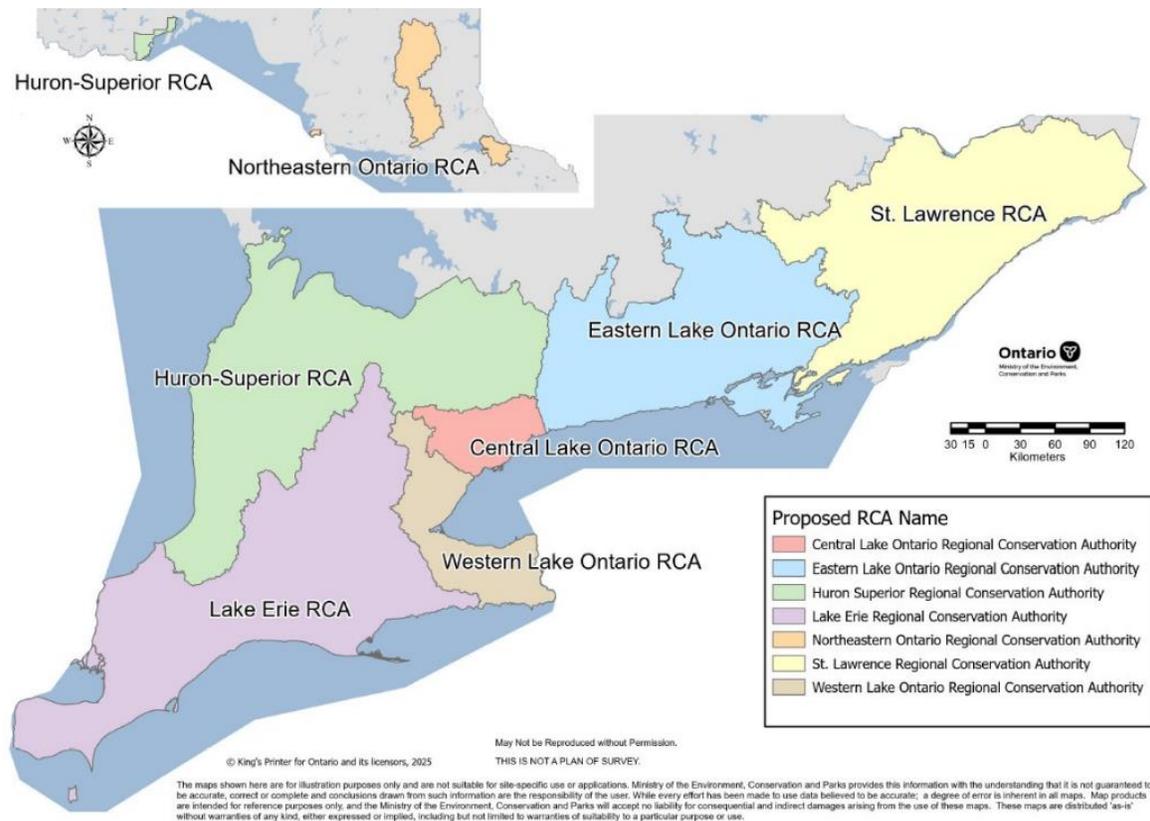
On October 31, 2025, the Province announced its intention to create a new agency titled the [Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency](#). The province states that the current system is fragmented, with each CA having its own policies, standards, fees and levels of staffing and technical capabilities, creating delays for builders, landowners and farmers seeking permits. The stated intention of this new agency is to address these issues, provide centralized leadership, efficient governance, strategic direction and oversight of all CAs.

On November 7, 2025, the [Province released the proposal to amalgamate the 36 CAs in the province to 7 regional CAs](#). The province states that this proposal is intended to

reduce duplicative administrative costs, free-up resources for frontline conservation, and better align CAs' services with provincial priorities on housing, the economy, infrastructure, and climate resilience.

The province requested input on this proposal through the Environmental Registry of Ontario by December 22, 2025.

1 Map of Proposed Regional Conservation Authorities



## Analysis:

Middlesex Centre is in a unique position to comment on the proposal to amalgamate Ontario's CAs. The Municipality has five different CAs within our boundaries: Upper Thames River CA, Ausable Bayfield CA, St. Clair Region CA, Lower Thames Valley CA, and Kettle Creek CA.

The crucial role CAs play in the protection of life, property, and infrastructure from flooding and other natural hazards cannot be understated.

While supportive of attempts to reduce administrative burdens, staff have significant concerns with the proposal. Staff fear that implementing such a strategy without a thorough implementation strategy will only serve to create more delays, cost, and administrative burden for years to come, all while reducing the ability of the CAs to achieve its core mandate – to protect the life, health, and property of Ontarians and our

environment. Watershed-specific knowledge, local partnerships, and local governance are essential and are greatly at risk by the establishment of large regional authorities.

Staff have prepared the attached correspondence to submit to the province in response to the proposal (Attachment 1) and will continue to participate in opportunities to work with CAs and the Province as this progresses. Staff have also attached correspondence received from various agencies and CAs in response to the proposal (Attachment 2).

### **Financial Implications:**

More information is required to assess potential financial impact of this proposal on the current Conservation Authority funding framework.

For reference, the 2025 Middlesex Centre budget contribution for all five CAs within our boundaries was \$450,153, which is less than 1% of the Municipality's operating budget.

### **Strategic Plan:**

This matter aligns with following strategic priorities:

- Responsive Municipal Government
- Sustainable Infrastructure and Services
- Balanced Growth

### **Attachments:**

A1 – Municipality of Middlesex Centre Draft ERO 025-1257 Submission

A2 – Municipality of Middlesex Centre Draft Resolution Re: Proposed Amalgamation of Conservation Authorities

A3 - Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority ERO 025-1257 Submission and Resolution

A4 – Kettle Creek Conservation Authority Board Resolution Re: Bill 68 and ERO Posting 025-1257

A5 – Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority Report Re: ERO Posting 025-1257

A6 – St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Communication Re: Proposed Regional Consolidation of Ontario Conservation Authorities

A7 – Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board Resolution Re: Bill 68 and ERO Posting 025-1257

A8 – Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority – Presentation Re: Amalgamations of Conservation Authorities