

December 22, 2025

Public Input Coordinator
Conservation and Source Protection Branch
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
300 Water Street North tower, 5th floor
Peterborough, ON
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Canada

Re: ERO #025-1257 - Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities

On behalf of the Ontario Nature Youth Council, we are writing to express our concerns regarding the consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities (ERO #025-1257 and Schedule 3 of Bill 68) and how this bill undermines the use of local expertise to guide local decisions on watershed health.

The Ontario Nature Youth Council is a diverse provincial network of young people who are inspiring, connecting, and educating our communities while protecting wild species and wild spaces. With 96 Youth Council members from 44 communities across Ontario, we put our best selves forward as we contribute to lasting, positive change through a variety of conservation actions in our community and on a provincial level.

Ontario Nature Youth Council members across the province have been educating their peers and the public about the importance of wetlands for Ontarians, biodiversity, and the well-being of current and future generations through workshops, presentations and outreach events. Below are our specific concerns regarding the proposed consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities (CAs):

- The proposed amalgamation undermines the use of local expertise to guide local decisions by allowing one person, the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, to make decisions about the new regional CAs' governance, programs, or services at any time.
- Flooding is Ontario's costliest natural disaster, and threats from floods are expected to worsen in coming years due to climate change and the removal of wetlands. Reducing the independent, local decision-making power of CAs may lead to decisions that cause flood risks to increase even more.
- Amalgamating the 36 CAs is likely to reduce the proper care and stewardship of watershed health, putting the lives of Ontarians (including species and spaces) at risk, affecting drinking water, freshwater habitats and recreational areas.

In my (Rowan's) home of Eastern Ontario, five separate CAs are set to be consolidated into one "regional conservation authority," set to cover an area over three times larger than Prince Edward Island. I live in what is currently the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA), which has 57 years of experience managing extensive infrastructure used to manage water levels and flows. This expertise and these resources would be significantly diminished if MVCA is amalgamated and managed by provincial political appointees. Ultimately, this proposal is not just an attack on Ontario's nature, but also the rights of Ontarians to environmental protections and local governance.

We urge the Government of Ontario to meaningfully consider the future of our lands and waters for all inhabitants, including ours and future generations. Why is it so necessary to push this proposal that would eventually harm Ontarians by worsening the effects of flooding and other environmental damage? As youth who care for Mother Earth, we envision a life filled with health and well-being, where our natural environment remains preserved and protected, including the watersheds we live, go to school, work and play in.

We thank you for your time and trust that you will take our views into account for your decision, as this proposed amalgamation affects all fellow residents of Ontario, including our watersheds and the beings that reside there. We invite you to meet with us to hear our viewpoint, and should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely in conservation and on behalf of the Ontario Nature Youth Council,

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