



STATEMENT FROM THE ESCARPMENT CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

Proposed Changes to Ontario's Conservation Authority System

December 17, 2025

The Escarpment Corridor Alliance (ECA) is writing to express our concerns regarding the Government of Ontario's proposed consolidation of the province's 36 Conservation Authorities into seven regional bodies, as outlined in Bill 68 and the October 2025 announcement by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Our Concern

While we appreciate the government's goal of improving efficiency and simplifying permitting processes to address our housing needs, we remain unconvinced that the proposed structural changes will achieve these objectives. More fundamentally, we lack evidence that consolidation will not undermine the core missions that Conservation Authorities have carried out for over 80 years: protecting watersheds, safeguarding environmental integrity, and serving their communities with transparency and accountability.

The ECA believes that major reform of any public system, especially one as essential as watershed management and environmental protection, requires a rigorous, evidence-based approach rooted in independent research and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

What We Recommend

The ECA calls on the Government of Ontario to pause the current legislative timeline and undertake the following steps:

1. *Commission Independent Research*: Engage an independent third party (or academic institution) to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Ontario's current Conservation Authority system. This research should examine:
 - The existing operational framework and decision-making structures
 - Current efficiency metrics and cost drivers across all 36 authorities

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- Specific bottlenecks that are delaying permitting and approvals
 - The comparative strengths and weaknesses of different regional models
2. *Produce a Detailed Report:* Publish a public report that identifies concrete areas for improvement and quantifies the potential costs and benefits of proposed changes. This report should include:
- A transparent cost-benefit analysis of the proposed consolidation
 - Risk assessments for service disruption during transition
 - Alternative scenarios for reform that may achieve government objectives without large-scale amalgamation
 - Projections on long-term funding and governance
3. *Consult Comprehensively with Stakeholders:* Before finalizing legislation, conduct genuine consultation with:
- Conservation Authorities and their boards
 - Member municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario
 - Environmental organizations and watershed groups
 - Indigenous nations with interests in affected regions
 - Development and agricultural sectors
 - The public

Our Commitment

The ECA is dedicated to working cooperatively with all parties to find solutions that support Ontario's environmental future. We believe that efficiency and environmental stewardship are compatible. However, achieving both requires that decisions be based on evidence, not assumptions, and that the voices of those who understand these systems best—local governments, CA staff, and environmental guardians—are heard before irreversible changes occur.

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We are prepared to participate in this process and support evidence-based reform that enhances, rather than diminishes, Ontario's ability to protect its natural heritage and manage its watersheds responsibly for future generations.

The Escarpment Corridor Alliance

The ECA is a regional conservation charity and land trust dedicated to South Georgian Bay. Established in 2021, the ECA aims to create a connected and protected ecological corridor along the Niagara Escarpment of South Georgian Bay. The organization strives to balance human activity and nature by enhancing the connectivity of protected natural lands and fostering nature connections within the community, benefiting health, the economy, and agriculture. The ECA represents over 4,000 actively engaged community supporters in South Georgian Bay.

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