

"Put a little back"

Nottawasaga River
Ontario, Canada

Nottawasaga Steelheaders

Letter of Concern and Opposition to the Proposal to Consolidate Conservation Authorities

RE: ERO # 025-1257

To: The Premier and The Progressive Conservative Government

The Nottawasaga Steelheaders are a conservation minded angling organization of over 2000 members who have been working with the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Nottawasaga Futures, South Simcoe Streams Network and various communities to preserve the integrity and functionality of the Nottawasaga watershed. We have undertaken numerous projects over our history of over 32 years including stream rehabilitations, tree plants, educational sessions, fisheries studies and fish lifts. We also have been serving on the Upper Great Lakes Management Unit/ MNRF Fish Management Zone Council for Zones 13 &14 for over 30 years,

We find the proposal and plan to consolidate all 36 Conservation Authorities to be myopic, ill conceived and a hasty effort to try to overcome issues regarding the processes and progress of passage of approvals. We also find the consolidation to 7 jurisdictions to be an over simplification falling very well short of the responsibilities of these Conservation Authorities that were appropriately established to preserve the integrity of watersheds and prevent flooding and potential damage to communities. The new proposed broad regionalized areas bear no significance to those critical responsibilities and we fear will result in their dilution and subsequently very negative impacts.

Conservation Authorities have been very well aware and in tune with the watersheds they have been responsible for many years. Each one of these watersheds is unique and the criteria and costs in terms of time and resources to assess each of the many proposals are different. There are many important reasons for these differences in each case and they cannot be corrected by a broad brush stroke plan that by its nature and action may very well result in serious consequences immediately or in the future. There must be responsibility in any decisions made. If that takes time, then better to spend that time wisely now than to spend the time mopping up the damages and life-altering consequences later because of decisions made in haste.

Keeping this in mind, how is a decision maker in one of these newly proposed areas, who is distant from specific area of interest, able to fully understand the issues and the circumstances surrounding it? Being unaware and uninformed can potentially result in the wrong action. Who then takes responsibility?? The risks are great and far reaching. That is why Conservation Authorities, as they are presently established, are on top of the issues surrounding their watershed and their specific responsibilities. The proposed plan of consolidation in an attempt to be efficient will definitely result in bureaucratic backups. It was your cuts to CA funding that have already made efficiencies difficult by reducing staff. And now you are planning will make CA's impotent in their crucial roles. Or do you care?!

How important is the Effective Management of the watershed (i.e. Nottawasaga River) by a tuned in CA? The "Notty" is important as a water source for many farms and recreational activities including golf, vacationing/swimming (Wasaga Beach – Internationally recognized as Blue Flag Rated Quality) and angling which contributes greatly to the \$8 Billion dollar Great Lakes Fishery. The Pine and Boyne Rivers, alone are home to the largest run of wild steelhead (rainbow trout) in the Notty, an important component and driver of that key fishery. It is also an important source of drinking water for a rapidly growing population throughout the area.

It appears to us that the Progressive Conservative Government has never thought of the Conservation Authorities and the role they play or the environment for the matter, as anything but an obstacle in it's very narrow minded focus on the economy and that is very sad. This is odd as it was a Conservative Government under George Drew in 1946 which put into place the foundations (Conservation Authorities Act, 1946) for Conservation Authorities in response to watershed flooding, erosion and mismanagement and aligned them rightly with specific watershed communities. NOTE: The purpose was to manage the natural resources (water, land, forests) "ON A WATERSHED BASIS" BALANCING HUMAN NEEDS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

We strongly urge you to investigate further, consult and cease the unnecessary haste to do something, the repercussions of which you will forever regret. This plan is totally unnecessary and wrong. There can be measures of improvement of processes without the introduction of broad, hasty and unnecessary actions such as those proposed. Efficiencies can be undertaken as per each watershed Conservation Authority. We strongly urge the Premier to visit a Conservation Authority to understand how they function and the crucial role they play...and not solely listen to those who are vocally complaining about delays and costs. You have already cut funding for the Conservation Authorities. Let's not destroy them!

Doug Ford, I was old enough to experience the trauma and damage reeked by Hurricane Hazel in 1954 and never wish to go through another experience like that again I fear the result of a hasty and wrong decision here is leading us that way. How do you want to be remembered, Premier?

We are anglers, concerned citizens...and we are voters!!

Yours Truly in Conservation,

Gary Christie

Gary Christie
Director, Nottawasaga Steelheaders