



Office of the Warden

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December 17, 2025

To: Hon. Todd McCarthy
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
minister.mecp@ontario.ca
VIA EMAIL ONLY

Re: Grey County Council Comments on Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act

Please be advised that the Council for the Corporation of the County of Grey endorsed the following resolution:

CW171-25

Moved by: Councillor Greig

Seconded by: Councillor Dobreen

That report PDR-CW-70-25 be received;

That County staff be directed to submit report PDR-CW-70-25 as the County of Grey comments on Environmental Registry Posting 025-1257; and

That the County of Grey requests assurance from the Province that the establishment of the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency will not be funded by the municipal portion of Conservation Authority levies and that it will not be funded from current Conservation Authority budgets; and

That Grey County requests the Province pause on passing any further changes to Conservation Authority structure until further analysis has been conducted and additional details are released on new proposed models; and

That report PDR-CW-70-25 be shared with Members of Provincial Parliament Paul Vickers and Brian Saunderson, as well as member municipalities, AMO and conservation authorities having jurisdiction in Grey County; and

That staff be authorized to carry out the above prior to County Council approval as per Section 26.6(b) of Procedural By-law 5134-22.

Carried

Grey County Council has reviewed the Province's proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and wishes to share our formal comments and recommendations, as adopted by Grey County Council on December 11th, 2025 through Report PDR-CW-70-25.

Key Concerns

Grey County recognizes the importance of modernization but has significant concerns regarding:

- Loss of local governance and watershed-specific expertise under large regional structures. Grey County Council expresses significant concern of the loss of rural identity within a new watershed that is dominated by large urban areas alongside the fact that this new regional structure will be larger than some countries.
- Reduced municipal input and diminished ability to address local priorities effectively.
- Uncertainty around service delivery, including source water protection and risk management functions critical to our communities.
- Lack of clarity in respect to asset management of flood control and water infrastructure.
- Erosion or loss of locally valued services in stewardship, local educational programs and recreational opportunities
- Additional costs without improvements to services (indeed, Council expressed concern that services would be reduced) associated with transitional costs, a new provincial agency, new regional management and administrative structures, levelling up of services, salary and technology equalization.

The suggested move to a Regional Conservation Authority model, and indeed, the Regions themselves do not appear to have any evidence based rationale to support how these will deliver more efficient, effective services, nor how costs will be reduced and Council expressed concerns that at best, services remain static and costs will increase; it is more likely that service levels will be reduced, and costs will increase. Further, Council articulated specific concern that the approach proposed seems

contrary to provincial policy, leading to increased red tape, further bureaucracy and slower and more expensive development review and approvals.

Suggested Improvements

Council supports constructive improvements to Conservation Authorities, including:

- Improved transparency and performance reporting to strengthen accountability, including new provincial wide technical and policy guidance to include additional KPI's. Council showed strong support for the use of Watershed Report Cards as key tools to demonstrate local value of watershed management activities.
- Enhanced collaboration tools for municipalities and authorities to share data and best practices.
- Streamlined permitting processes without compromising environmental protections.
- Investment in digital modernization to improve service efficiency and public access.

Council agreed that through implementing improvements such as these, in collaboration with Conservation Ontario and Conservation Authorities, within the context of the existing structures and legislation, improvements could be identified without costly and disruptive systems overhaul. Further, through implementation of these measures data could be gathered that might be evidence that amalgamations in geographically relevant, specific areas could result in service improvements, where supported and directed by member municipalities to those Conservation Authorities.

Grey County urges the Province to work collaboratively with municipalities and conservation authorities to ensure that modernization efforts preserve local decision-making, protect donated lands, and maintain strong watershed management practices.

Thank you for considering these comments. We welcome further dialogue and remain committed to supporting effective, locally responsive conservation governance.

The full report is attached for your reference. All Grey County Council meetings are streamed and available to watch online. [The discussion on this topic starts at approximately minute forty.](#)

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December 17, 2025
Yours truly,



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Grey County Warden
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Enclosures

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Committee Report

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	December 11, 2025
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-70-25
Title:	Office of the Warden
Prepared by:	Niall Lobley, Deputy CAO and Scott Taylor, Director of Planning
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer, CAO
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All member municipalities in Grey County

Recommendation

1. That report PDR-CW-70-25 be received;
2. That County staff be directed to submit report PDR-CW-70-25 as the County of Grey comments on Environmental Registry Posting 025-1257; and
3. That the County of Grey requests assurance from the Province that the establishment of the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency will not be funded by the municipal portion of Conservation Authority levies and that it will not be funded from current Conservation Authority budgets; and
4. That Grey County requests the Province pause on passing any further changes to Conservation Authority structure until further analysis has been conducted and additional details are released on new proposed models; and
5. That report PDR-CW-70-25 be shared with Members of Provincial Parliament Paul Vickers and Brian Saunderson, as well as member municipalities, AMO and conservation authorities having jurisdiction in Grey County; and
6. That staff be authorized to carry out the above prior to County Council approval as per Section 26.6(b) of Procedural By-law 5134-22.

Executive Summary

On October 31, 2025, the province announced changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* which would:

- a) create a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, and
- b) consolidate Ontario's current thirty-six conservation authorities into seven new regional conservation authorities.

The stated goals of these changes are to “*reduce duplicative administrative costs, free-up resources for frontline conservation, and better align conservation authorities’ services with provincial priorities on housing, the economy, infrastructure and climate resilience.*”

On November 27, 2025, Bill 68, the *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025 (No. 2)* received royal assent. Bill 68 creates the above-mentioned Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency.

County and municipal staff have questions and concerns about the proposed changes. The purpose of this report is to provide Council some background on the proposed changes, as well as outlining the County's questions and concerns, including recommending some additional ideas the province can consider on this topic. It is recommended that this report form the basis for the County's comments back to the province in response to Environmental Registry posting 025-1257.

Background and Discussion

The first *Conservation Authorities Act* in Ontario was passed in 1946. This legislation was passed in response to concerns ‘that the renewable resources of Ontario were in an unhealthy state based on poor land use, water, and forestry practices’. A notable hallmark of Ontario's conservation authorities (CAs) legislation is that CAs are based on natural watershed boundaries, rather than political boundaries. Even in the original 1946 legislation, costs of projects were to be shared by municipalities and the provincial government. An important milestone in Ontario's conservation journey was the devastating impacts of Hurricane Hazel in 1954. After the hurricane, Ontario made further changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* “*to enable Conservation Authorities to acquire lands for recreation and conservation purposes, and to regulate that land for the safety of the community.*” (Source: [Conservation Ontario website](#))

The role of CAs has continued to evolve since the 1950's, and the *Conservation Authorities Act* has been amended many times since then, including several times in the

last seven years. On October 31, 2025, the province announced further changes to the Act. Through the November 7, 2025 Environmental Registry posting (posting # 025-1257, see link in the Attachments section of this report) the province is now seeking feedback on these matters. The proposed changes, if passed, would primarily accomplish the following:

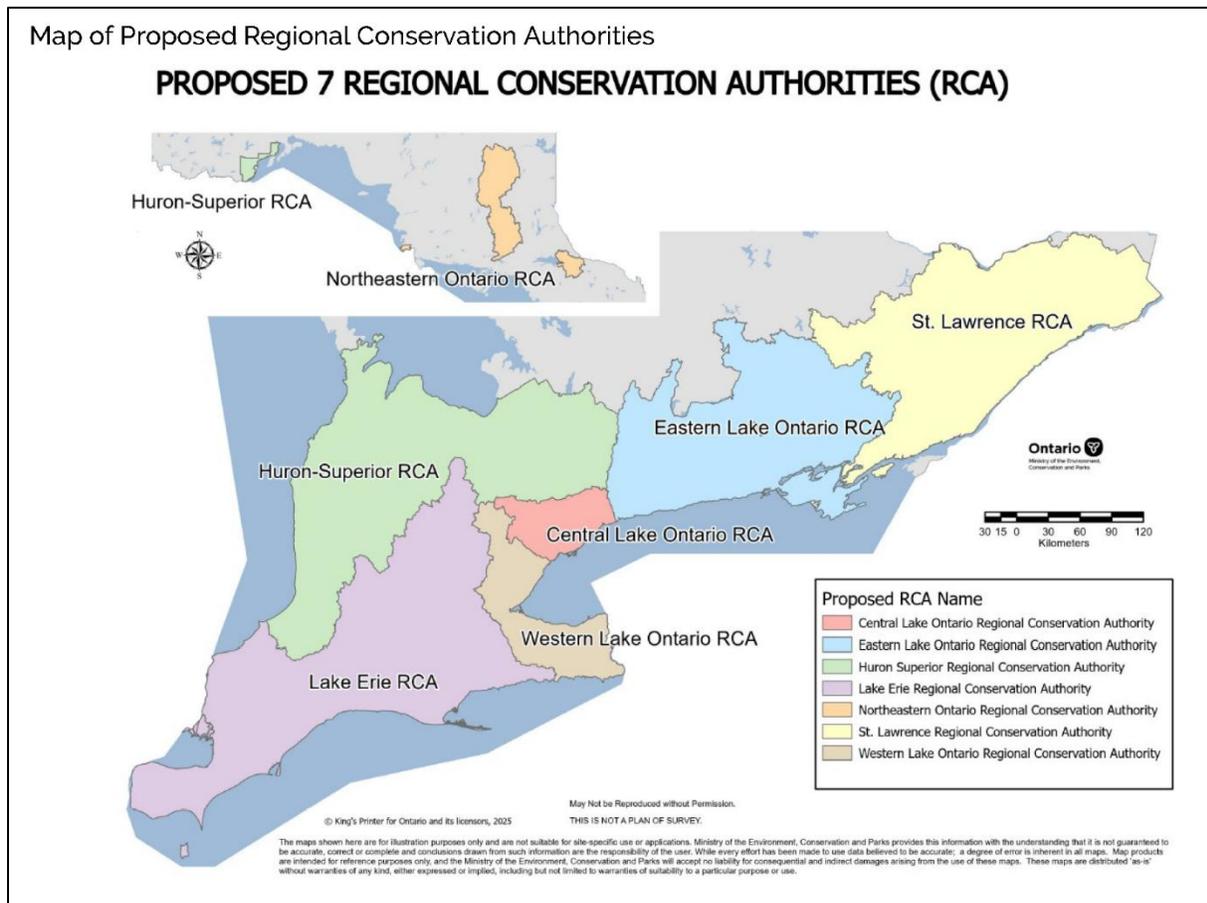
- a) create a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, and
- b) consolidate Ontario's current thirty-six conservation authorities into seven new regional conservation authorities.

With respect to item (b) above, map 1 below shows the seven new regional conservation authority (RCAs) boundaries, while maps 2 and 3 show the two RCAs with jurisdiction in Grey County, being the Lake Erie RCA and the Huron-Superior RCA.

On November 27, 2025, Bill 68, the *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025 (No. 2)* received royal assent. As it pertains to the *Conservation Authorities Act* changes, Bill 68 establishes the new provincial agency as follows.

“The Schedule amends the Conservation Authorities Act. The Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency is established. Its objects include overseeing conservation authorities and the transition to a regional watershed-based framework for conservation authorities in Ontario.”

Map 1: Proposed Regional Conservation Authorities



The provincial government's stated purpose for these changes is described as follows in the Environmental Registry posting:

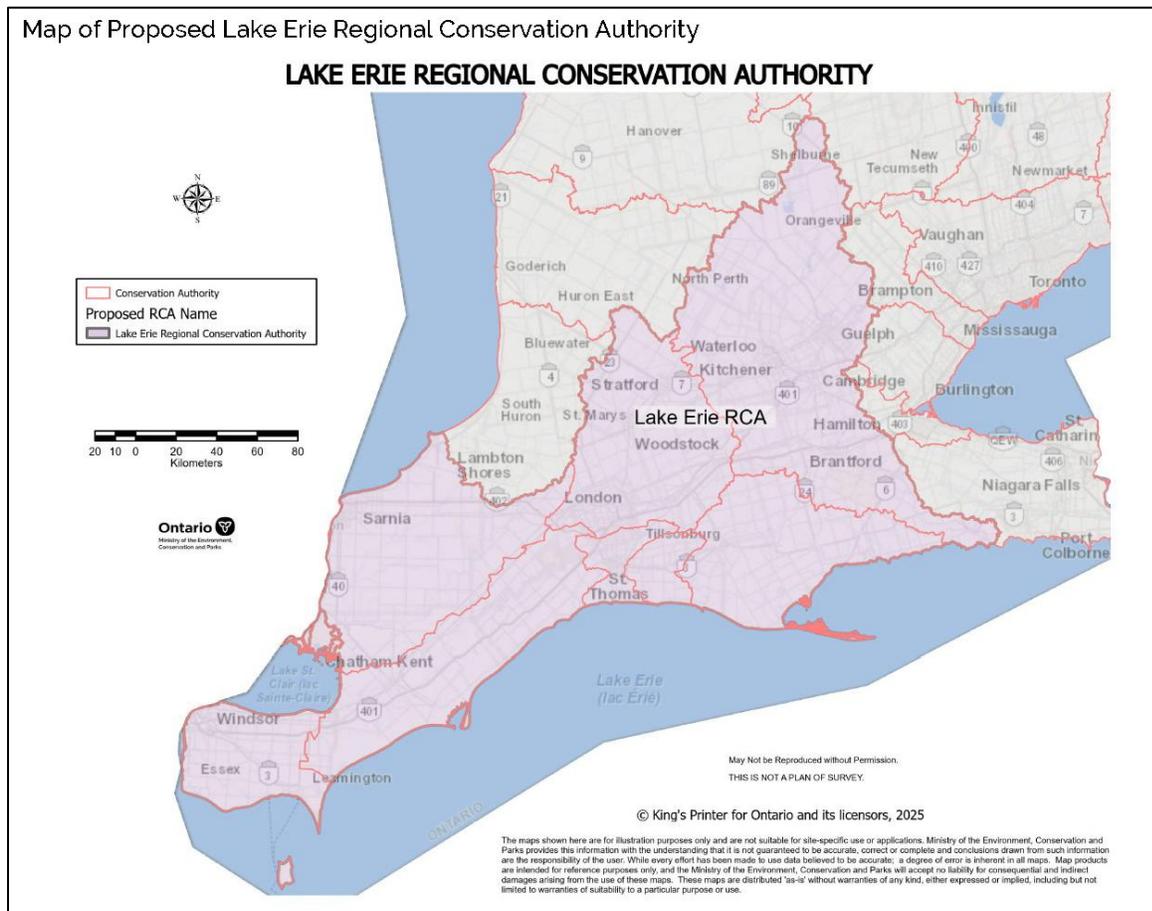
"The Government's intention to introduce legislation which, if passed, would amend the Conservation Authorities Act to create the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency – a provincial board-governed agency – to provide centralized leadership, efficient governance, strategic direction, and oversight of Ontario's conservation authorities..."

These proposed improvements to the conservation authority system would reduce duplicative administrative costs, free-up resources for frontline conservation, and better align conservation authorities' services with provincial priorities on housing, the economy, infrastructure and climate resilience.

The regional conservation authorities would continue to focus on managing natural hazards and watershed health, drawing on decades of local knowledge and partnerships. With better tools and more resources for front-line staff, the regional conservation authorities would operate with greater consistency and transparency,

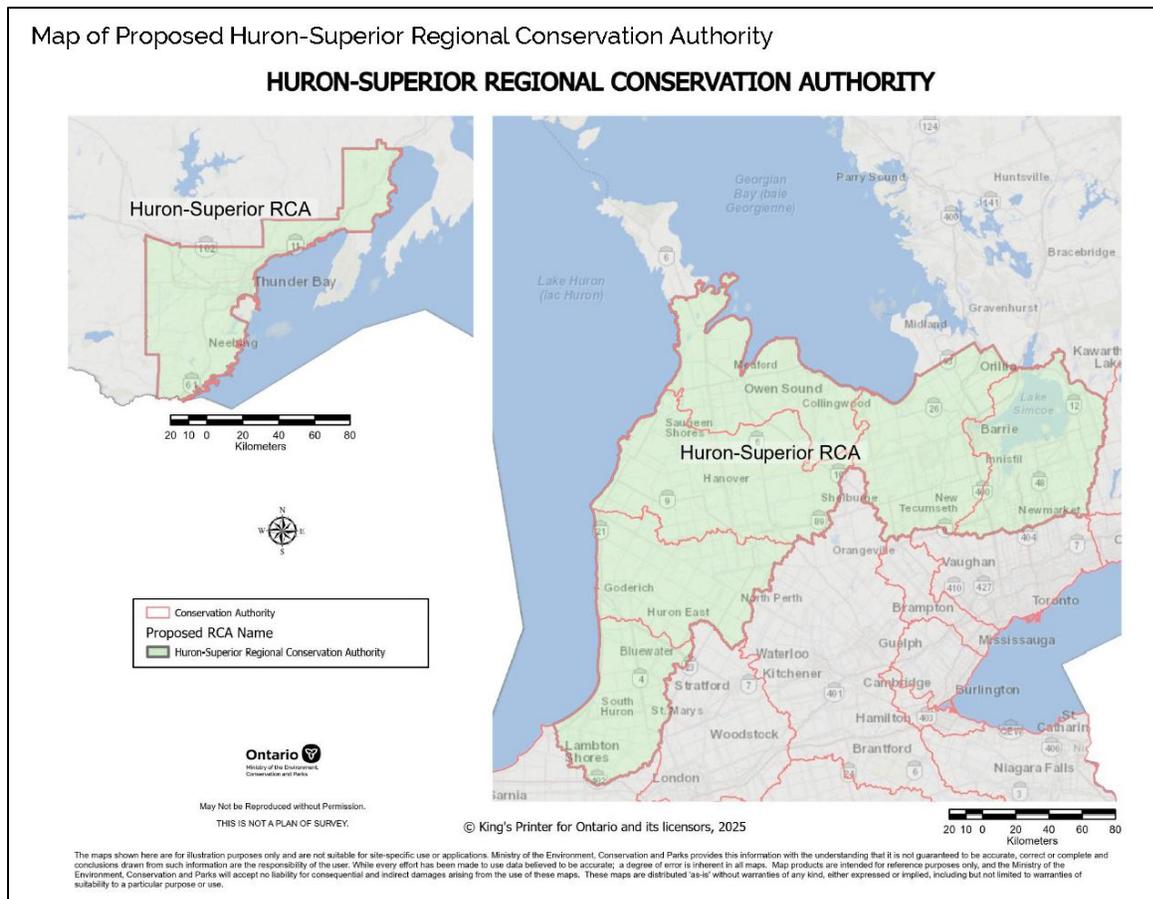
deliver faster services to municipalities and permit applicants, while ensuring decisions continue to be based on sound science.”

Map 2: Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority



The government has further shared that there would be no changes to the overall extent of CAs jurisdiction, and that the RCAs would remain independent organizations with municipal oversight. Furthermore, the RCAs would continue to be involved in mandated programs including drinking water source protection. RCAs would also still be involved in tree planting, data collection, and watershed management activities. The province has further indicated that there would be significant efficiencies through the move to RCA's and confirmed that there will be no job losses through the changes proposed, while noting some management positions would be redeployed to supporting front line conservation efforts.

Map 3: Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority



The province has stated that one of the reasons for consolidation of CA boundaries is to reduce the number of municipalities which are served by multiple CAs. If the changes are passed, the number of municipalities served by multiple CAs would be reduced by 63%. Grey County is currently served by the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA), Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA), and Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA). If passed, the County would be served by the Lake Erie and Huron Superior RCAs. The make-up of the two RCAs is outlined in table 1 below.

Table 1: Lake Erie and Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority Composition

	Lake Erie RCA	Huron-Superior RCA
Total # of former CAs being consolidated	8	7
Total # of lower-tier and single-tier municipalities served by the RCA	81	80

Potential Impacts and Questions regarding the Proposed Changes

Following the province's announcement, County staff have had the opportunity to talk to CA staff with jurisdiction in Grey, primarily, GSCA and SVCA staff, as they collectively serve most of Grey. County staff have also discussed the proposed changes with Planning, and some Building staff, from Grey's member municipalities. A summary (in no order of importance) of some of the questions and concerns stemming from these discussions is as follows. Staff welcome additional feedback from members of Council and member municipalities to further shape these questions, comments, concerns and opportunities that may be presented by the new model proposed. Staff are proposing on sharing these concerns with ministry staff alongside a response to the ERO posting as well as in delegations and discussions with MPP's and Ministers at ROMA if there is opportunity to do so.

Ultimately, Grey County staff believe that the proposed RCA model and the new Provincial Conservation Agency will weaken local representation, will see local services lost, and will drive up costs and red tape. Further, it will shift focus away from rural and agricultural communities and diminish local services such as recreation, stewardship and educational programs, services that communities cherish.

- 1) **Timelines and Pausing a Decision on Further Implementation** – Although Bill 68 has now been passed, the County recommends that the province consider pausing any further changes in favour of completing a cost-benefit analysis (including a workforce and geographical analysis) of the current system of 36 CAs, vs. the proposed regional system of seven RCAs. The County expresses significant concerns at the lack of local service delivery with the proposed seven RCAs and urges the province to taking evidence-based review of where and if amalgamations are of value. Regionalization should only proceed if there are known performance indicator (KPI) outcomes that will be improved by such a new system. Moving ahead now, with insufficient study, risks irreparable damage to working relationships fostered over decades, as well as potential damage to watersheds, properties, or waterways. If the province does decide to move forward with amalgamations, the County would recommend an approach of phased amalgamations, targeted to existing regions where KPIs are not being met, to better explore and understand potential challenges and opportunities before province wide role out.
- 2) **Local Service Delivery** – many CAs offer specific and tailored programs to local communities. Programs such as landowner stewardship incentives, tree planting,

development of Managed Forest Plans, and engaging around land donation under the EcoGift program. These services are not guided by specific legislation but have been developed in partnership with communities specific to local needs. Further, many CAs undertake local initiatives such as Water Festivals and Forest Festivals or tree sales, which work well at a local level but would not be effective on regional levels. Under the proposed RCA model, how will these events, activities, programs, and services be retained at a local level?

- 3) **Vast Geography and Maintaining Local Relationships** – More details on the regional structure are needed to help inform an understanding of it. The Huron-Superior RCA spans more than 800 kilometres (kms) of geography with a 1,600 kms road distance between its southern and northern communities. One of the benefits of the current model is the relative proximity of the CA staff to the municipalities they serve, and the relationships built between municipalities, the CAs, community organizations, and the development community. Having CA staff that can attend local meetings, or arrange joint site visits, with relatively short notice, is a ‘must’ in the current system, and needs to be maintained under any new model. The existing relationships between staff could take years to replace, resulting in a less expedient development process, if fractured by the new model. How will existing local offices and their staff continue to be supported? Will the existing local offices continue to provide local services and what assurances can the province give that local access to CA services will be retained? How will each of these sites be managed? Given the vast regional territories, what supervisory and management structures will be in place to support local service delivery? The County would reiterate the need to keep local staff across the watershed.
- 4) **Emergency Management** – Conservation Authorities have become trusted partners in emergency management, providing expertise and staffing to support emergency management. From flood forecasting and ice and waterway management, through to expertise in lands management and a unique understanding of how the local environment is responding to weather and climate change, CA’s local proximity is critical to support municipal emergency management efforts. Regional offices would have difficulty in responding quickly and managing events linked to flooding, frazil ice, or blizzards, if they are not located locally.
- 5) **Municipal Representation** – Municipal representation for many CAs is driven by the lower-tier municipalities and, for large areas of the province, these are the only tier of municipal governance. There are 80 lower-tier and single municipalities (in addition to the upper-tiers) within the proposed Huron Superior

RCA. There are 81 lower-tier and single municipalities (in addition to the upper-tiers) within the proposed Lake Erie RCA. How will a Board, that represents; communities under 10,000 people or over 100,000 people, urban and rural, coastal and inland, be effectively represented when servicing this many municipalities?

- 6) **Rural Lens vs. Urban Focus** – Existing levy funding models apportion costs based on assessment value with areas with higher assessment value contributing more. While not precise, this model generally ensures that funding is proportionate to community size, enabling funding influence on Conservation Authorities to be proportionate to the communities they serve. Further, Board composition is based on municipal representation; communities with higher populations have more members and votes on the Board, but the Board is represented by members from all municipalities within its jurisdiction. The new Huron Superior RCA, of which Grey County is part, includes urban communities such as Thunder Bay as well as Aurora, Newmarket, Orillia and Barrie, King Township, rapidly growing, urban centres reflective of typical GTA growth and pressures, a stark difference from Grey County. Together, these represent over 550,000 residents. These communities will likely dominate proportional funding for the new RCA and will likely command significant influence on the work and priorities of the RCA having a disproportionate impact on smaller, rural communities. Where will the needs of smaller rural municipalities like some of the member municipalities within Grey County be met in such a model?
- 7) **Transitional Costs** – A transition of the scope and scale as proposed will come with high transitional costs. These could be associated with the release of existing facilities, the acquisition of new facilities, new branding, websites and application processes. These transitional costs could also include salary costs such as for equalization of wages across CAs. These costs should not be passed onto municipalities to bare.
- 8) **Municipal Funding Model** – CAs are supported and funded by member municipalities. Individual CAs set a budget based on meeting local needs. Under recent changes to the CA Act (Bill 108), it developed three classes of services; mandatory, self financed, and municipal service agreements. Some CAs worked with member municipalities to provide broader scopes of services than others. How will funding between disparate CAs be aligned? It is noted that for changes to be implemented after the municipal election in 2026, municipalities will need budget clarity on proposed changes by mid 2026.
- 9) **New Provincial Agency** – Through the passing of Bill 68 the province has created the Provincial Conservation Agency, to establish strategic leadership and centralized services. It has been indicated that this agency will be funded from

provincial funding, fees for services and cost recovery from Conservation Authorities. As CAs rely on municipal funding for much of their mandatory work, it is possible that municipalities will find increased costs being born by them to fund their RCA's commitment to the new provincial agency. Further, the new agency will be itself managed by a new Board of between 5 and 12 members; how will locally representative voices be reflected on this board?

- 10) **Equalization Funding between CAs** – Significant funding is likely to be required. There currently is a mix of larger and smaller CAs. In the larger CAs, there has often been the benefit of additional resources and partnerships to develop enhanced tools and resources to help manage areas. Larger CAs often have better detailed ecological mapping, up-to-date watershed mapping, up-to-date flood mapping, and detailed mapping layers in geographic information systems (GIS). These tools are used to ensure effective, data-based decision making. However, access to these tools is not equal to all CAs with some smaller, less flexibly resourced teams not having access to these tools or staffing expertise levels. The province's stated commitment was to equalize and standardize service levels. Who will be funding the required investment to ensure equitable access to resources and tools?
- 11) **Charitable Foundations and Volunteer Organizations** – Some CAs have offshoot charitable foundations and volunteer organizations (e.g., the Grey Sauble Conservation Foundation, Friends Of 'X' Conservation Area groups), which both fundraise (such as for educational programs) and perform some maintenance / management activities on specific properties. Some of these organizations may be small, whereas elsewhere in the province these foundations raise millions in funds to support local initiatives. How will the legal structures and on-going contributions (financial and in-kind) of such organizations be managed under the new RCA model?
- 12) **Lands Management** – CAs manage 100,000's acres of land across Ontario. A small fraction of these lands provides for recreation, and an even smaller number of these lands generate revenue to help offset recreational programs. Most of these lands are available informally for recreation, but their prime function is to support healthy watersheds, biodiversity and ecological integrity of systems. Within the new RCAs how will lands be managed, both those with intense use that generate revenue (but need careful management for risk and ecological damage) and those that hold no opportunity for revenue generation, but require essential stewardship and management?
- 13) **Agreements** – How will recreational agreements with hunting organizations, trail user groups, municipalities, and First Nations with recognized rights be managed across the RCAs? These have had, in some areas, decades of careful

negotiation to develop. How will the use and management of the use of snowmobile and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on CA lands be adequately managed? Furthermore, some municipalities and counties, including the County of Grey, have agreements in place with local CAs to contract out forest management, trails, and by-law enforcement services to CA staff on a fee for service basis. Will such municipal agreements still be feasible and honoured under the new RCA model?

14) **Water Control Structures** – The basis for CAs was the protection and management of water. CAs manage thousands of water control structures. How will local staff needs be delivered through the RCA model?

15) **Climate Change Adaptation** – CAs play a critical role in protecting Ontario from loss of life and impacts to property as a result of flooding. With variations in weather due to climate change, the role of CAs across watersheds is only becoming more important. Updated mapping, green infrastructure, ongoing watershed management, and other climate adaptations will need to be adaptive to local conditions and responsive to emerging science. CAs need to retain their independence as a regulatory body to protect Ontario. While additional housing and a prospering economy are key provincial and municipal objectives, so too are the health and safety of our communities. As insurance costs continue to rise, CAs need to continue to safeguard our communities against future financial and physical losses.

16) **Drinking Water Source Protection** – Source Water Protection (SWP) became a priority following the Walkerton tragedy. Local boards, mirroring CA areas, were formed to assess risks and establish protocols for SWP. How will the SWP model, with CAs and local representation be impacted by these changes?

17) **Staffing** – The Minister repeatedly indicated that there would be no job losses. Municipalities have formed working relationships with staff employed locally who have also acquired, at times, many years of local experience. Support for maintaining local jobs to support local delivery are a priority. Not only are these jobs and roles key to delivery of local priorities, these roles provide important employment in local communities helping support families and the communities they live in.

Responses to the Environmental Registry Discussion Questions

In the Environmental Registry there are five discussion questions which the province is seeking feedback on. Responses to each of these questions has been provided below.

1. What do you see as key factors to support a successful transition and outcome of regional conservation authority consolidation?

If the province proceeds with a regional conservation authority approach, the following matters need to be considered.

- a) Only proceeding with any changes if the cost-benefit analysis and KPI improvements demonstrate justification for such changes.
- b) Maintaining local staff and staff relationships at CAs throughout the province. Successful transition will depend on clarity about what stays local and what becomes regional.
- c) A sustainable governance model with municipal involvement and oversight.
- d) A fair model for representation to ensure smaller communities within a larger RCA do not get overshadowed by the larger communities within the RCA.
- e) The ability to recognize local and regional differences between CAs and adapt programming and staffing accordingly.
- f) The ability to continue to offer local programs and service delivery beyond those that are provincially legislated.
- g) Sustainable funding models both throughout the transition period and ongoing thereafter.
- h) A transition period which recognizes suddenly merging eight CAs into one regional CA will take time. Processes, software, and staffing will all need time to adjust to this change.
- i) Limited bureaucracy between the new provincial agency and the RCAs. The more RCAs can be empowered to act locally, without needing to seek approvals from a centralized provincial agency will benefit future response times and decision making.
- j) Maintaining service levels in rural Ontario will be critical, as well as ensuring municipal agreements are protected.
- k) The ability to maintain agreements with local clubs or volunteer organizations to help maintain both recreational and operational roles in partnership with CA staff.
- l) The ability for municipalities to partner with the new RCAs on funding applications or joint projects which serve a local need.

With these points in mind, the province may wish to consider a possible phased in or transitional approach to amalgamations assuming that these amalgamations can be justified. By implementing a KPI evaluation of existing CAs, it might be possible to identify where amalgamation and increased resource sharing would be most beneficial. These CAs might be an opportunity to amalgamate initially to explore service enhancements, challenges and opportunities through greater regionalisation. Assuming justified, these benefits could then be phased in through broader amalgamation. This

would allow for an evidence-based approach to transition, without system wide risk and potential costly errors that would be difficult to reverse.

2. What opportunities or benefits may come from a regional conservation authority framework?

Some of the smaller or less funded CAs currently have difficulty maintaining up-to-date mapping and securing certain levels of staffing expertise. In a regional model, if appropriately funded, there could be some level of equalization which allows for the smaller CAs to have better access to resources and staffing levels beyond what they currently have now. Whereas currently some CAs may not be able to employ a hydrogeologist, under the new RCA model, the business case may support hiring such experts.

3. Do you have suggestions for how governance could be structured at the regional conservation authority level, including suggestions around board size, make-up and the municipal representative appointment process?

For the two RCAs which will be serving Grey County, there are 80 and 81 lower-tier or single-tier municipalities in each. Board sizes will not be able to accommodate representation from each municipality. That said, there needs to be fair representation to ensure that smaller communities do not get overshadowed by larger communities on the board. Perhaps there could be upper-tier and single-tier representation on the board, to ensure a more manageable board size. The municipal appointment process should remain local, and not require provincial appointments.

4. Do you have suggestions on how to maintain a transparent and consultative budgeting process across member municipalities within a regional conservation authority?

As per above, when some of the new RCAs contain 80+ lower-tier or single-tier municipalities, it will be difficult to coordinate an RCA budget process. Municipalities need input into the process, but there needs to be a finite process, such that timely budgets can still get passed. From an operational standpoint, it may be easier for the new RCAs to be entirely provincially funded, along with user fees, vs. relying on municipal property tax levies.

5. How can regional conservation authorities maintain and strengthen relationships with local communities and stakeholders?

As per the answer to discussion question one above, items (a), (c), (d), (e), (h), and (i) will be crucial to ensure local needs are met.

Additional Recommendations for Provincial Consideration

The County understands and supports the province in seeking to modernize, identify efficiencies and support consistent, effective, province wide service delivery that meets the needs of communities and delivers on provincial priorities. The County believes that these outcomes can be met through regulatory and policy changes that do not require disruptive system wide overhaul and that further exploration of these would be of value. For example:

- Technical Guidance – providing updated province wide technical guidance to CAs to support modern and consistent decision making and service delivery.
- Consistent Policy Framework at a regional level – build on the singular regulation already implemented to support consistent policies, perhaps on eco-district levels.
- Existing KPIs (permit approval in 90 days or less) are being met; implement further KPI's that seek to identify gaps in service provisions.
- Online Permitting System – many CAs already use digital platforms for permitting, some dovetail with municipal online permit systems. Work with CAs to implement similar or identical online permitting systems which dovetail with outcomes sought in Bill 60 for municipal planning permit systems. (Note: back ups to digital systems will be needed for residents without access to online systems or who may wish to submit by traditional means).
- Permit fees standardization – the province has frozen permit rates for several years and could, within existing authorities, implement regional or province wide standard permit fees. If the province wanted CAs to abolish permit fees, this could also be achieved providing an alternative source of funding could be identified. The County would note that for many 'development pays for development' has been a guiding principle and that permit costs are the costs associated with the review and approval of development applications, however, there are other means that could be explored here within the existing legislation.
- If there is evidence and data where existing CAs are unable to provide consistent, reliable and timely services, or where their founding municipalities are seeking change; then support amalgamation on a case-by-case basis. Such amalgamations should be on geographically appropriate scales to see if amalgamations provide the cost and efficiency benefits that the province is

seeking to achieve, prior to any whole scale amalgamations across vast geographic regions. For example, the existing Source Protection Regions (of which there are 17) may be a basis for future regional CA's, or, smaller geographic areas, such as those CA's with watersheds draining to Georgian Bay, or Lake Simcoe, East and Central and West Lake Ontario, the North, Lake Huron North and South and Lake Erie, East and West. Regardless of where future amalgamations may be, these should be made based on evidence and data and be watershed relevant and of a scale that maintains the local basis of CAs.

Legislated Requirements

The province is proposing legislative changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

Financial and Resource Implications

The financial and resource implications stemming from the proposed changes are not known at this time. Municipal tax levies provide funding for CAs currently, but it is not yet known how this could change, should the RCA model be implemented. Should the province proceed with these changes, a further report can be prepared outlining the financial impacts.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Climate Change, CAO/Deputy CAO, Legal Services, and Planning
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets: See commentary in the report on climate adaptation and impacts
- External: Member municipalities, as well as conservation authorities having jurisdiction in Grey County

Appendices and Attachments

[Link to Environmental Registry Posting 025-1257](#)

Letter to Province on Conservation Authority Consolidation

Final Audit Report

2025-12-18

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