

# MUNICIPALITY OF MORRIS-TURNBERRY

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Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks  
Conservation and Source Protection Branch  
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## **Municipality of Morris-Turnberry Submission to ERO 025-1257 - Consultation on Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities**

The Municipality of Morris-Turnberry is a lower tier municipality in Huron County, located in southwestern Ontario. Our municipality falls mostly under the jurisdiction of the the Maitland Valley Conservation authority, with other areas being under that of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority. Morris-Turnberry Council has reviewed ERO 025-1257: consultation on *Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities* and offer the following for consideration.

Several concerns related to these proposed changes have been identified:

- What is the cost of establishing and operating the proposed Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA)? The OPCA would require significant resources while local watershed advisory boards would still be needed to guide priorities and provide oversight.
- The Province has not developed a business case to support the proposed changes. How do they know whether these changes will improve services and create efficiencies if they have not undertaken any analysis of the costs and the benefits?
- What is the cost of consolidation? Who will pay for these costs?
- As a local organization Maitland Conservation is responsive to community needs. Municipalities, landowners, and community partners drive the services and priorities of the organization. If the OPCA is going to provide strategic direction to conservation authorities and Conservation Authorities are consolidated into seven regional conservation authorities then this would mean less municipal input on service priorities.
- We are deeply concerned about whether the needs of rural communities and the agricultural sector will be adequately recognized and prioritized in this consolidation, particularly since the lead Conservation Authority is expected to be an urban one in each region.
- Maitland Valley's permitting process is efficient and consistent— in 2024, the average time to process all types of permits was just 5.7 days. From start to finish, their staff work closely with landowners, emphasizing customer service and helping them identify safe building locations outside hazardous areas. Will the proposed digital permitting platform be able to match our turnaround times and maintain this high level of customer experience? Additionally, what will the costs be for developing and maintaining this platform?

Conservation Authorities were founded on the principles of watershed management, a partnership between the Province and municipalities, and a focus on local watershed priorities.

Morris-Turnberry Council encourages the Provincial government to work collaboratively with Conservation Authorities to build capacity and support local solutions to restore the health and resiliency of watersheds.

Member municipalities provide 80% of MVCA's operating budget while the Province provides 2%.

Across all Conservation Authorities the province provides 5% of the funding. A renewed partnership needs to include the Province providing a greater share of the funding as they did in the 1980' and 1990's.

To protect Ontario's prosperity, we need to focus on developing and protecting the health of watersheds. They are the foundation of not only our economic prosperity but our life support system as well. Clean water, diverse forests and healthy soils directly support key sectors like tourism, forestry and agriculture, which in turn support economically strong communities.

We encourage the province to work collaboratively with Conservation Authorities and their member municipalities to determine how we can best achieve healthy, resilient and prosperous watersheds.

Healthy Lake Huron is a model of collaboration between federal, provincial and county agencies, five conservation authorities and several community groups. HLH has been successful in supporting stewardship initiatives aimed at improving water quality along the Lake Huron shoreline. Using this collaborative approach across all the watersheds in Ontario to build healthy watersheds would result in effective, cost-efficient results.

Sincerely,



Trevor Hallam

CAO/Clerk

Municipality of Morris-Turnberry