



Essex Region Conservation Authority

Board of Directors

BD22/25

From: Tim Byrne, CAO/Secretary-Treasurer

Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025

Subject: Proposed New Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency

Compliance Action: Pending legislative changes from the Province

Recommendation: THAT the ERCA Board of Directors receive report BD22/25 for information.

Discussion

Further to the October 31st, 2025, press release and news conference held by the Honourable Minister McCarthy, Ministry Environment, Conservation and Parks, legislation will be introduced to create an Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency. This agency would oversee changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and the transition to amalgamate the current thirty-six conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities.

As outlined in the Minister's press conference, the new regional conservation authorities will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) Maintaining watershed-based jurisdictions for effective flood and water management, reducing administrative overlap and duplication for municipalities and Conservation Authorities;
- 2) Balancing expertise and capacity across conservation authorities to improve service and program delivery; and
- 3) Ensuring uninterrupted delivery of local conservation area programs.

Minister McCarthy indicated that conservation authorities will continue to delivery programs and services that are delivered currently. Protecting against natural hazards such as flooding will continue along with the protection of drinking water sources. Conservation authorities will continue to manage lands, trails, and other recreational and education facilities. Minister McCarthy

One of the key priorities of the agency will be to establish a single digital permitting platform for consistency across Ontario to help reduce red tape and provide a faster, more predictable approval process and to improve customer service. Additionally, this new provincial agency will set performance standards and support the consistent application of these standards with centralized data and updated floodplain mapping.

This regional amalgamation from thirty-six to seven conservation authorities will be extremely challenging given the diversity of watersheds throughout the province. Conservation Authority staff through committee representation from across the province had completed a similar task referred to

the paragraph above in 2008. The technical information and proposed guidelines were never implemented by the previous government or current government. Some of the concerns expressed by the previous and current governments had been that the generated technical information and policy would limit development from proceeding within or in close proximity to significant natural heritage and significant natural hazard threats. Changing or rearranging policy does not diminish or eliminate risk to lives or property if development is allowed in or near these areas.

The Minister committed that there will be no change in the conservation authority mandate, the areas served by conservation authorities would not be change, nor would the funding.

It is anticipated that the Conservation Authorities Act and associated regulations will undergo significant changes to comply with the new agency objectives and initiatives. The Minister indicated that these changes to enabling legislation will be put forward in early 2026 and will be led by the new Conservation Authority Agency.

This Board will remain in place until the end of their appointed current term coinciding with municipal elections in late October 2026. It is yet to be determined the governance structure of a new potential, amalgamated local/regional agency and the provincial oversight agency.

The Minister indicated that the amalgamation of 36 Conservation Authorities into 7 regional entities will occur in late 2026 and be fully implemented by 2027.

This commentary is being provided as this information has only been released online and as circulated. Significant question and resulting concerns are being expressed by numerous stakeholders and at this time there is no structure or answers available.

The consultation process for the creation of the new Conservation Authority Agency will be posted publicly on Ontario's Environmental Registry and open to public input in the coming weeks. All municipalities and other interested persons are encouraged to review, consider and respond to the consultation postings.

Approved By:



Tim Byrne, CAO/Secretary Treasurer

Attachments:

- [MECP News Release, Ontario Creating New Conservation Authority Agency to Improve Service Delivery and Protect Communities, October 31, 2025](#)
- [Minister McCarthy - Press Conference, October 31, 2025](#)