



2019 Ontario Budget Consultation

Minister of Finance

Submitted by Conservation Ontario

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Continued Support Needed from Province to Protect Health and Safety of Ontarians

There's nothing like a powerful rainstorm or rapid snowmelt to make us thankful for the work that conservation authorities (CAs) do with the Province of Ontario and others.

The provincially funded Natural Hazards and Drinking Water Source Protection programs, administered by Ontario's 36 conservation authorities, protect public health and ensure the safety of people living and working in Ontario. These programs also help to keep the economy on track by preventing costly damages and business disruptions due to flooding, and ensuring there is enough safe water for all our needs.

Flood Management Programs

Public Safety Canada reports that floods are the most costly natural disaster in Canada. And, next to spring thaw, heavy rains are the most common cause of flooding.¹ Each year, Ontario experiences larger and more frequent flooding. The Insurance Bureau of Canada reported that by August of 2018, the cost of flooding in Ontario for that year, alone, was already creeping up to \$1 billion due to six major storm events.²

Ontario's 36 conservation authorities receive \$7.4 million annually in transfer payments under the Province's Natural Hazards program. This money is well spent across 36 Conservation Authority flood management programs resulting in many benefits:

- Protects lives by keeping people out of flood-prone and other hazardous areas
- Avoids millions of dollars in flood damages and business disruptions – helping the economy to get back on track more quickly
- Monitors flood conditions and provides early warnings to residents, agencies and businesses
- Contributes to local emergency planning which helps local people and businesses to immediately respond to flooding issues

Through the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) program, the Province provides conservation authorities with an additional \$5 million in matching grants to address issues around conservation authority flood infrastructure (dams, dykes, etc). This work significantly

¹ Public Safety Canada <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/mrgnc-mngmnt/ntrl-hzrds/fld-en.aspx>

² Insurance Bureau of Canada (2018) <http://www.ibc.ca/on/resources/media-centre/media-releases/toronto-flood-causes-over-80-million-in-insured-damage>

reduces the impacts of flooding and erosion. It is estimated that a total of 58,500 homes and almost \$150 million in damages are avoided by operation of CA flood infrastructure.

Conservation authorities' flood programs save the Province money.

Conservation authorities are the first line of defense in preventing and reducing the impacts of flooding, thereby also reducing the need for flood disaster assistance.

Conservation authorities are responsible for monitoring and predicting flood flows and water levels within their watersheds using information gathered from stream gauges, weather stations, snow surveys, meteorological forecasts and computer models to forecast and disseminate messages to local municipalities and agencies about potential floods. They work closely with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and Environment Canada (MNRF) to track flooding and provide advice to municipalities in the preparation of flood contingency plans and are active participants during the emergency response process.



Photo: Thames River - Facebook 2018

Protecting Drinking Water Sources Saves Lives

Funding under the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection program also protects lives.

The unfortunate water tragedy that took place in Walkerton, Ontario (2000), which led to the establishment of the program, is still fresh in our minds. Seven people died and many others were sick due to contaminated sources of drinking water. Since then, the provincially funded

program has resulted in 22 source protection plans that protect municipal drinking water sources in Ontario from contamination and overuse³.

Administered under the *Clean Water Act*, this watershed-based program complements municipal water treatment and supports sound land use planning decisions, helping to save lives and reduce the costs of treating water.

Conservation authorities play an important role in the successful implementation of this public health program. They have designated responsibilities under the Clean Water Act, and work closely with stakeholders to ensure that our sources of municipal drinking water are safe and abundant.

More Information:

Kim Gavine, General Manager, Conservation Ontario
Tel: 905-895-0716 ext 233; kgavine@conservationontario.ca
120 Bayview Parkway, Newmarket ON L3Y 3L5
www.conservationontario.ca

³ <https://conservationontario.ca/conservation-authorities/source-water-protection/>