



Conservation Ontario 2017 Annual Report

2017

CONSERVATION MATTERS



Conservation MATTERS



Dick Hibma
CHAIR

Kim Gavine
GENERAL MANAGER

A New Conservation Authorities Act

The hard work and efforts of Conservation Ontario staff and the collective Conservation Authority community was finally realized with the passage of Bill 139 (the ‘new’ Conservation Authorities Act) on December 12, 2017!

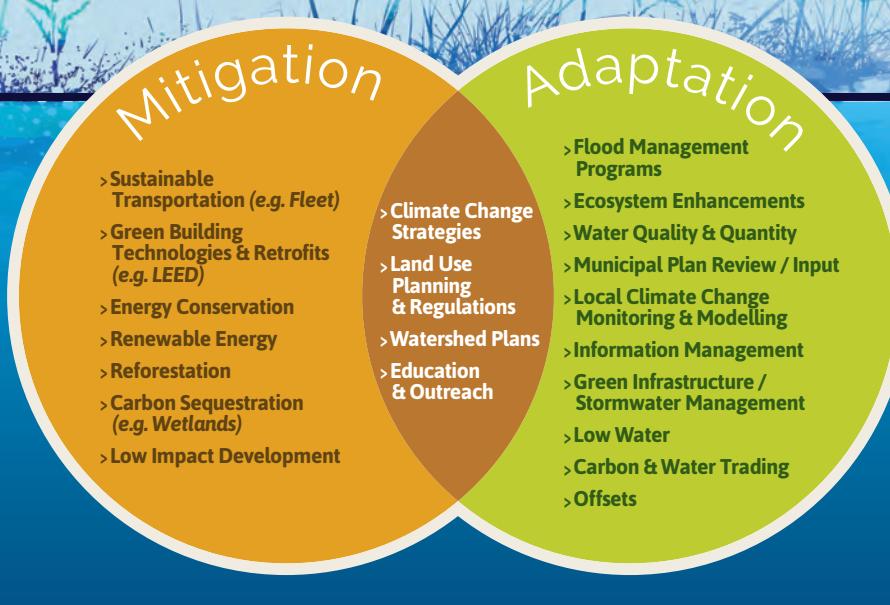
Bill 139 – *The Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act* is known as an “enabling piece of legislation” which means that many of the amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* are yet to come and will be implemented through new regulations, policies, procedures and programs. The proposed changes have been captured in a provincial document titled *Conserving our Future – A Modernized Conservation Authorities Act* which sets out a comprehensive suite of actions to be taken over the next four years. Implementation of these actions will aim to achieve:

- Clarity in the roles and responsibilities associated with the conservation, restoration, development and management of Ontario’s natural resources
- Accountability for the fulfillment of these roles and responsibilities and ensuring that decisions are made in accordance with modern expectations for participation and transparency in decision-making
- Sustainability in funding for the programs and services put in place to ensure Ontario’s natural resources are managed in a responsible manner
- A modernized policy framework that enables the province to be responsive to the resource management challenges of today and tomorrow

Many of Conservation Ontario’s proposed recommendations made during the review were either captured in the legislative changes or are anticipated to be addressed through the forthcoming regulatory, policy and program changes. We are encouraged that the new legislation will enable Conservation Authorities to continue their important role in addressing many of today’s environmental and resource management challenges on a watershed basis, particularly in light of the growing impacts of climate change and rapid urbanization. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the process.

What are Conservation Authorities doing around climate change?

Conservation Authorities help the Province to specifically address the impacts of climate change through watershed planning, implementation of development regulations, stewardship and restoration initiatives such as tree planting and green infrastructure, support for low impact development stormwater management technologies, and most importantly delivery of our flood management operations.





Building Information Capacity for Conservation Authorities & Partners

Conservation Authorities (CAs) are increasingly challenged to manage the information they collect/create and to share it in new and innovative ways to support their business and to enable sound decision-making and support the shaping of today's environmental policy.

Environment Connections – Online Portal

In 2017, Conservation Ontario partnered with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to continue to develop 'Environmental Connections', an online, geographic information system (GIS) application that aims to improve the quality and accessibility of Conservation Authority and other partner data.

A number of web applications (story maps) were developed in 2017 to showcase and share CA data and monitoring programs around watershed report cards, climate change, and Great Lakes. Conservation Authorities will be using the online watershed report card application to launch the collective results of their 2018 watershed report cards.

Geography Awareness Week / GIS Day Twitter Campaign

Conservation Ontario used a Twitter campaign to engage in the National Geographic Society's Geography Awareness Week (November 13-17) and GIS Day (Nov 15). Both programs are designed to raise awareness about geospatial and geography issues, uses and benefits. The campaign was successful in reaching over 23,000 Twitter users and a wide range of Conservation Authority GIS work was highlighted.

Making Conservation Authority Data Discoverable

Conservation Ontario continued its project with funding support from the Great Lakes Observing System to enable CAs to make their data more discoverable and accessible. In 2017, CO inventoried over 1,300 CA datasets and conducted a user needs analysis to identify the top ten candidates to consider in the development and recommendation of a common CA metadata standard.



Working Towards Healthy Great Lakes & Watersheds

In 2017, Conservation Ontario continued to participate in the Great Lakes Guardian Council meetings, Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Executive Committee and the binational Annex sub-committees and working groups on topics including: Lakewide Action & Management Plans, Nutrients, Groundwater, Climate change, and Science.

Work was undertaken around the Canada-Ontario Action Plan for Lake Erie and the ongoing Nearshore Assessment Framework. Nine Conservation Authorities and Conservation Ontario advocated for a new partnership among CAs, the Province and Federal government to deliver a Lake Erie Action Plan that is based on science, leverages funding investments and measures/reports on progress. Recommendations were included in a report entitled "A Collaborative Approach to Improve Soil Health and Water Quality in the Lake Erie Watershed".

Conservation Ontario also partnered with the International Joint Commission (IJC) to conduct a survey of shoreline residents along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River to determine the scope and magnitude of shoreline impacts due to extremely high water levels in 2017. The report will be completed in 2018.



LATORNELL
CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM

Latornell Conservation Symposium Tackles Succession Theme

The 800 delegates at the 2017 Latornell Conservation Symposium explored the theme: **Succession – The Nature of Change**. Delegates were welcomed at a powerful opening plenary with Grandmother Kim Wheatley from the Shawanaga First Nations Reserve. Other keynote speakers included Leadership Advocate Leona Dargis from the Yukon, radio broadcaster Terry O'Reilly and TVO celebrity Steve Paikin who hosted a panel on water takings. Kathryn McGarry, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) also addressed delegates.

Latornell Leadership Awards were presented to four recipients:

BRIAN KELLY
Manager of Sustainability at the Regional Municipality of Durham

GEOFFREY PEACH
(awarded posthumously), Coastal Resources Manager at Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

MARK HEATON
Fish and Wildlife Biologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

DR. STEVEN COOKE
Canada Research Chair and Professor at Carleton University in Ottawa



Drinking Water Source Water Protection (DWSP)

A Public Health Program Benefiting Our Watersheds, Groundwater, Great Lakes and Addressing Climate Change Impacts

Conservation Authorities played a vital role in 2017 as source protection authorities under the Clean Water Act (2006), supporting the implementation of local Source Protection Plans (SPPs).

The SPPs contain policies that protect our sources of municipal drinking water, enhancing our watersheds' health. Drinking water systems of three First Nations are included in the source protection planning process. Implementation of policies is well underway by various organizations, and the progress is reported annually through source protection authorities.

Throughout 2017, Conservation Authorities provided several benefits including: risk management services; technical studies; engaging First Nations; implementation support and local outreach; and source protection plan updates. CAs are part of a project led by CO to incorporate climate change impacts into drinking water source protection water quality risk assessment.

Conservation Ontario (CO) strongly supports the DWSP program at Conservation Authorities across Ontario, liaising with multiple stakeholders. CO is a member of the Joint Advisory Committee which provides long-term strategic recommendations for the program.

EcoHealth



Healthy ecosystems such as lakes, rivers, forests and wetlands are essential for human health and survival. We all depend on clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, healthy soils for food production, and green spaces for recreation and to enrich our lives. There is growing evidence that we gain specific physical and mental health benefits from living in clean, healthy ecosystems and from having access to natural areas and biodiversity.

Throughout 2017 Conservation Ontario and Conservation Authorities helped people to connect with nature and learn about their local ecosystems. As well, Conservation Ontario, Credit Valley Conservation and Toronto & Region Conservation continued to participate in the EcoHealth Ontario collaborative.

EcoHealth Ontario

EcoHealth Ontario activities and outcomes help to support the watershed management work of Conservation Authorities and connect people more closely to nature. In 2017, the collaborative developed two videos showing the benefits of greenspaces and role of EcoHealth Ontario; a biodiversity discussion paper reviewing the extensive collection of scientific evidence of the mental health and physical benefits of engaging with nature; and a Policy Toolkit to assist municipalities and other agencies to incorporate ecohealth policies and practices into their corporate culture.
Info: ecohealth-ontario.ca

EcoHealth Ontario partners also assisted Conservation Authorities by engaging in consultations regarding the review of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

Healthy Hikes Campaign & Mood Walks

Conservation Ontario and Conservation Authorities participated in Conservation Ontario's 5th annual Healthy Hikes Campaign. The 2017 social media campaign encouraged people to visit their local Conservation Area, take a selfie and share it on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) with the hashtags #StepIntoNature and #HealthyHikes.

Conservation Ontario shared six nature-themed social media campaigns that promoted Conservation Authority activities in almost 300 Conservation Areas from May 1 to October 31. Eighteen partners helped to promote the campaign.

Conservation Ontario also partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association of Canada on a 2017 Mood Walks Campaign.



Impacts of Increased Flooding Affecting People & Property

"Water is the New Fire" Insurance Bureau of Canada (2018)

The frequency of damaging and costly flooding is rising. Extreme flooding creates costly infrastructure and property damages, disruptions to business and personal stress for homeowners and others.

Conservation Authorities prevent and reduce the impacts of flooding through the following activities:

- floodplain mapping, modelling, and monitoring of streamflow, rainfall and snowpacks in cooperation with all levels of government
- regulating development in flood prone areas
- planning support & advice to municipalities to minimize flood impacts and issue warnings
- acquisition of important floodplain lands and flood vulnerable structures
- operating and/or maintaining over 900 dams, dykes, channels and erosion control structures (asset replacement value: \$2.7 billion)

Conservation Authorities also bring added protection and benefits through their watershed planning and watershed management programs such as stewardship and restoration, stormwater management (LID) and green infrastructure.

Additional funding to support this work is needed. In 2017, Conservation Ontario continued to promote its Flood Business Case encouraging provincial investments to address aging flood infrastructure, outdated floodplain mapping and enhance flood operations which are needed in order to continue to monitor conditions and alert emergency response teams to flooding.

Also, in 2017 Conservation Ontario co-hosted a Floodplain Mapping Technical Transfer Workshop and continued to work with the insurance industry to share information and identify where they might be able to leverage resources.

Conservation Authority input to national floodplain mapping guidelines was provided to the Federal government by Conservation Ontario. Input was also provided to the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation and Standards Council of Canada regarding '*Preventing Disaster Before It Strikes: Developing a Canadian Standard for New Flood-Resilient Communities, 20 Critical Best Practices*'.

Conservation Ontario also worked with the Federal government to identify opportunities for Conservation Authorities to access flood damage recovery funding.

Protecting People & Property from NATURAL HAZARDS



Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Funding

The Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WEKI) funding program is designed to ensure that major maintenance projects are undertaken on aging flood infrastructure which are critical to protecting lives and homes from flooding and other natural hazards. Conservation Ontario and a number of Conservation Authorities work with staff from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to identify eligible projects and assess distribution of funding. A total of 122 funding applications for 2017/2018 were received from 22 Conservation Authorities with total project costs just over \$12 million (exceeded available funding). Of these, 71 projects were approved for 24 Conservation Authorities for a value of \$10 million (\$5 million from the Province; \$5 million provided by participating municipalities).

With funding support from MNRF, Conservation Ontario hosts and maintains the WEKI database which is used for submission and review of applications.

Training to Support Regulatory Compliance

With funding support from MNRF, a number of training opportunities were provided to Conservation Authority Provincial Offences Officers in 2017 including: Conflict Management Workshop; four Level-2 Workshops (Scene Management,

Inspection vs Investigation and Conflict Resolution, Interview Techniques, and Court Experience); and, a pre-Latornell workshop on Section 28 Case Studies.



Supporting Our Members (Conservation Authorities)

Shaping Policy

23 Submissions to provincial and federal consultations on topics including: CA Act Review (2), climate change (1), Great Lakes (1), Streamlining Regulations (6) [including source water protection perspective/water takings/stormwater management – Low Impact Development], Provincial Plans and Planning (4), Natural Hazards and Flood Management (3), Large Scale Fill (1), CA Land Management/Trail (1), Agriculture/Soil Health (2), and Aquatics and Fisheries (2).

Training

Conservation Ontario facilitated training for a number of topics including, Clean Water Act Risk Management Officials, the Ontario Benthic Biomonitoring Network, Freedom of Information, Environmental Targets, Crisis Management & Planning as well as Southern Ontario Stream Sediment. Conservation Ontario also initiated the development of a Conservation Ontario Training and Professional Development Strategy.

Shared Services

Conservation Ontario also provides a number of cost savings and efficiencies for its members through bulk purchases, shared tools, messaging and best practices. In 2017, Conservation Ontario implemented Year 1 of a new three-year enterprise licence agreement with ESRI Canada, renegotiated group access to the Teranet Geowarehouse and participated in an agreement for a number of Conservation Authorities to access Environics Analytics, a business

Conservation Authorities University (CAU)

Conservation Ontario worked with Conservation Authorities to deliver the Conservation Authorities University (CAU) 2016/2017 training program for Conservation Authority CAO/GMs and senior staff.

Recognizing the need for succession planning, the program is focused on building corporate resilience by sharing information and best practices around Conservation Authority (CA) business needs as well as collaborating to develop solutions for shared business challenges. It is delivered by senior leaders and discipline experts throughout the Conservation Ontario network.

2016/2017 Program – Year 2

47% participated (17 Conservation Authorities) 35 speakers (from 17 Conservation Authorities, Conservation Ontario, and 9 external partners)

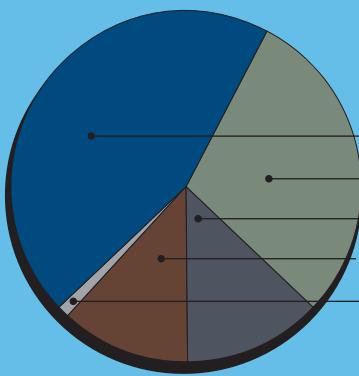
4 Modules

- Governance (Module 1)
- Public Administration I & II (Modules 2 & 3)
- Conservation Authority Business Areas (Module 4)

intelligence business tool. Conservation Ontario was able to negotiate a cost reduced extension to the CA Maps agreement, permitting 11 Conservation Authorities access to shared mapping

Various communication tools such as social media infographics and messaging were developed and used by Conservation Authorities for their Healthy Hikes campaign and to promote information about the Conservation Authorities Act Review.

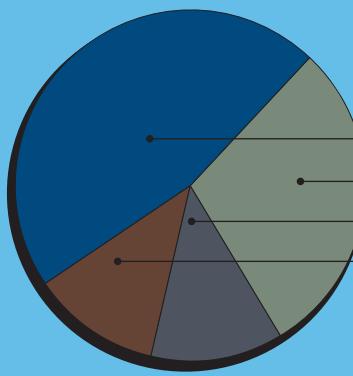
2017 Financial Information



Revenues

Membership Fees	\$1,217,001
Special Projects	\$797,243
A.D. Latornell	\$342,852
Source Water Protection	\$320,061
Other	\$29,213
Total	\$2,706,370

Expenditures



Operations	\$1,241,310
Special Projects	\$786,080
A.D. Latornell	\$331,302
Source Water Protection	\$311,634
Total	\$2,670,326

