



December 17, 2025

RE: Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority position regarding the regional amalgamation of Ontario's conservation authorities as proposed through Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257

The following motion was passed at the SSMRCA's meeting of December 16, 2025.

Motion: #122/25

Motion moved by Ron Zagordo and motion seconded by Margaret Christenson.

WHEREAS the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has posted Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 ("Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities"), proposing to reduce Ontario's 36 conservation authorities to 7 regional entities as part of a broader restructuring that would create a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized oversight and direction under the *Conservation Authorities Act*; and

WHEREAS under this proposal, the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority (SSMRCA) would be merged into a new "Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority" together with the:

- Nickle District Conservation Authority (Sudbury)
- Mattagami Region Conservation Authority (Timmins)
- North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority

forming a single organization stretching over 600 km from one end to the next; and

WHEREAS the Board acknowledges and supports the Province's goals of improved efficiency, consistency and fiscal prudence in conservation delivery, but finds that the proposed "Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority" configuration would:

1. Create a geographically vast and administratively complex entity, joining northern municipalities throughout the province with little shared watershed connection or economic alignment;
2. Dilute local accountability and municipal partnership, contrary to the principle that decisions are best made closest to the communities they affect;
3. Generate substantial transition costs — including human-resources integration, governance restructuring, IT migration and policy harmonization — that would divert resources from front-line service delivery and delay measurable outcomes, contrary to the Province's own business-planning principles of value for money, cost containment and service continuity; and,
4. Risk greater uncertainty and delay for builders and developers, as local permitting offices and staff familiar with site conditions are replaced by distant regional structures, making it harder for applicants to obtain timely local advice, resolve issues or expedite housing and infrastructure approvals that support the Province's "Get It Done" agenda; and





WHEREAS the SSMRCA has already undertaken significant modernization work aligned with provincial objectives, including:

- Implementation of digital permitting options that has reduced turnaround times;
- Continued improvements in transparency and client communication;
- Small staff compliment that are cross trained in multiple positions while operating with minimal administrative layers;
- Internal reviews to identify opportunities for cost savings and efficiencies;
- Conversion of redundant support and non-mandatory positions to front-line mandatory service positions;

demonstrating that meaningful modernization can occur within the current watershed-based governance framework; and

WHEREAS the Board further recognizes that the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority serves close communities facing different hydrological and infrastructure realities, with similar topography that is largely affected by being coastal cities on the north shore of Lake Superior, which would be ill-served by a larger overarching administrative structure extending over 600 kilometers to inland townships north and east of the Sudbury area;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Board of Directors does not support the proposed “Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257; and
2. The Board instead endorses the Ministry pausing any decision to consolidate conservation authorities to allow for further provincial evaluation of a more focused specific model as a geographically coherent, cost-effective and locally accountable alternative that advances the government’s priorities of efficiency, red-tape reduction and timely housing delivery; and
3. The Board requests that the Ministry engage and collaborate directly with affected municipalities, Indigenous communities, and conservation authorities across Ontario before finalizing any consolidation boundaries or legislative amendments; and
4. That this resolution be forwarded to the Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations and to:
 - The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and his Opposition critics;
 - Ontario’s Chief Conservation Executive;
 - Local Members of Provincial Parliament;
 - Batchewana First Nation;
 - Garden River First Nation;
 - Missanabie Cree First Nation;
 - Métis Nation of Ontario;
 - The Association of Municipalities of Ontario;
 - All local municipalities;
 - Sault Ste. Marie North Planning Board;
 - Conservation Ontario and all Conservation Authorities in Ontario

CARRIED





**Sault Ste. Marie Region
Conservation Authority**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Barrett".

Corrina Barrett
General Manager, Secretary-Treasurer
Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority



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