

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Look at Proposed Changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*

NEWMARKET, May 31, 2017 Conservation Authorities and others are having a first-hand look at the proposed changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* introduced to the Ontario legislature on May 30th under *Bill 139: Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act*.

The *Conservation Authorities Act* governs Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities and has been under a review led by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) for the past two years. It was originally established in 1946.

"We're very pleased to have had a significant opportunity to provide thoughtful input to changes to the legislation and we've encouraged our partners and the general public to also contribute their comments," said Kim Gavine General Manager of Conservation Ontario, the Association which represents the Conservation Authorities.

The proposed *Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act*, would make changes to the *Planning Act* as well as modernize the current *Conservation Authorities Act*.

The Province indicated their intention is to strengthen oversight and accountability, provide clarity for conservation authority roles and responsibilities, encourage public engagement and modernize funding mechanisms. The proposed *Conservation Authorities Act* was introduced along with legislation to overhaul the province's land use planning appeal system.

"As Ontario's population continues to grow and our climate changes, the demands and challenges facing our watersheds will continue to increase. The proposed bill would create a modern framework to help Ontario's conservation authorities respond to these pressures while delivering the services that the people of Ontario expect and rely on," said MNRF Minister Kathryn McGarry in a [Ministry media release](#).

Gavine stated that Conservation Authorities look forward to working with the Province and other key stakeholders in moving forward with modernizing the legislation.

Conservation Authorities are unique to Ontario.

They are local natural resource management agencies which were established by the Province and local municipalities starting in the 1940s. They play a central role in the restoration, conservation, development and management of Ontario's natural resources.

Conservation Authorities rely on a science-based [integrated watershed approach](#) to manage the impacts our activities have on land and water resources. This approach allows us to protect the long term viability of natural resources, while at the same time addressing critical issues such as the current and future impacts of urbanization and climate change.

Over the years, Conservation Authorities have developed close relationships with their local municipalities, community groups, landowners, some Indigenous communities and other residents as well as worked in partnerships with all other levels of government and other agencies.

Conservation Authority programs and services are funded significantly through municipal levies and self generated revenue. They also receive some funding from other partnerships with provincial and federal governments. Conservation Authorities help the Province and municipalities to deliver two significant provincially designated programs which are natural hazard management, including flooding and source water protection.

Conservation Authorities also offer a wide variety of other [watershed management programs](#) which help to build resilient watersheds, ensure healthy Great Lakes and address climate change impacts. Many residents enjoy events and outdoor activities through the conservation areas located throughout the province.

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