

Media Release

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Conservation Authorities Pleased Their Role in Ontario's Flood Management is Recognized

2019 Flood Advisor Report

NEWMARKET (November 28, 2019) Conservation Ontario is pleased that the report released today by the Province's Special Advisor on Flooding recognizes the critical role that conservation authorities (CAs) play in Ontario's flood management.

Flood management in Ontario is a shared responsibility among municipalities, emergency management officials, the Province and conservation authorities. This report recognizes the value of the conservation authority model and recommends that the Province 'consult with the conservation authorities on their application of the natural hazards-based approach and risk-based approach to managing flooding'.

"A quick scan of the 66 recommendations shows us that Mr. McNeil appreciates the collaborative nature of flood management in Ontario," said Kim Gavine, General Manager of Conservation Ontario which represents the 36 conservation authorities. "We've worked well with the Province, to date, and we look forward to continuing to develop improvements.'

"We're very pleased to see that he appreciates the collaborative approach, however, maintaining and making improvements in Ontario's flood management programs requires resources that include appropriate policy and program support," Ms Gavine said. "For example, the 50 per cent reduction to conservation authorities' provincial transfer payments for the natural hazards program affected all CAs and erode our ability to effectively address issues raised by the Flood Advisor."

Following up from a difficult spring flood season that stretched into the summer months, the Province appointed Doug McNeil as Special Advisor on Flooding to conduct an independent review of flood management and the 2019 flood events in Ontario and provide advice to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Mr. McNeil examined Ontario's current flood management framework, exploring the various roles of agencies, such as conservation authorities, who are involved in reducing flood risk, as well as reviewing the policies and technical guidance which makes up the policy framework for flood management in Ontario.

Conservation Authorities reduce flood risk by relying on a watershed management approach.

“The mandate of conservation authorities is the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources,” Ms. Gavine said. “Using a watershed-based approach has effectively protected Ontarians for years and helped to avoid many more millions of dollars in damages and business disruptions. It also helps to build resiliency in local watersheds helping our communities to adapt to the growing impacts of climate change more easily.”

In addition to operating \$3.8 billion worth of flood control infrastructure, CAs also bring added protection and benefits through various watershed management programs and activities such as:

- watershed scale monitoring, data collection/management and modelling,
- watershed scale studies, plans, assessments and/or strategies as well as
- watershed-wide actions including stewardship, communication, outreach and education activities.

Conservation authorities are recommending to the Province that these kinds of foundational watershed management activities be captured in the *Conservation Authorities Act* regulations which are currently being developed.

Conservation Ontario will be working with the conservation authorities to review the report in more detail and look forward to continue to collaborate with Province to reduce the risk of flooding in Ontario.

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