



Media Release

Conservation Authorities Act Regulatory Proposals

Conservation Ontario Suggests Solutions to Important Concerns Around Proposed Changes

NEWMARKET (June 23, 2021) Conservation Ontario's comments on the regulatory proposals required to implement changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* support the proposed core watershed-based resource management strategy and also identify a number of key challenges to successful and timely implementation.

Conservation Ontario Chair, Andy Mitchell, points out that conservation authorities need to move forward from the rigorous debate that took place around Bill 229 and create a regulatory framework that works for conservation authorities and their member municipalities.

"We're glad to be involved and have an opportunity to provide comments. We need to make sure conservation authorities can implement the proposed changes, while still continuing to protect people, property and our environment."

Mr. Mitchell also points out that because there are a lot of changes being proposed by the Province, it will take extra time and funding both on a one-time and continuous basis to ensure smooth implementation.

Conservation Ontario's submission to the Environmental Registry flags some important concerns and solutions:

- In order to meet the extremely tight timelines with implementing the proposed changes, the Province needs to move phase 1 and phase 2 consultations along quickly.
- It's essential to capture the passive recreation opportunities (e.g. hiking trails and boat launches) as mandatory programs and services in order to ensure public access to the conservation lands and adjacent waterways. There are few revenue generation opportunities in most of the almost 300 conservation areas that offer only or primarily passive recreation lands. Some of the conservation areas could close to the public otherwise.
- As well, municipalities and others have already contributed significantly to the establishment of well used recreational and educational infrastructure such as comfort stations, interpretive centres and visitor parking lots. The infrastructure associated with CA recreation and education programs should be included in the mandatory Conservation Lands programs and services so that these valuable assets are maintained and can continue to be used by Ontario residents.

- Nature-based solutions such as private land stewardship protect and restore the watershed's green infrastructure (e.g. forests, wetlands, riparian buffers) which helps to reduce and mitigate the risk of flooding and erosion and should be designated as mandatory programs and services under Natural Hazards.
- The mandatory Community Advisory Boards being proposed by the Province need to be flexible and not duplicate the work of the Conservation Authority Boards. As well, Indigenous representatives be exempt from the requirement that members reside in the authority's jurisdiction as Indigenous communities with an interest in a conservation authority's watershed may have representatives who live outside the jurisdiction.

"Conservation Ontario and the conservation authorities are committed to work with the Province in helping to address our collective environmental challenges by exercising our critical roles and responsibilities under the *Conservation Authorities Act*," said Mr. Mitchell.

Conservation Ontario's entire submission is available [online](#).

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About Conservation Ontario

Conservation Ontario is a non-profit association that represents Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities. Conservation Authorities are community-based watershed management agencies, whose mandate is to undertake watershed-based programs to protect people and property from flooding, and other natural hazards, and to conserve natural resources for economic, social and environmental benefits. Conservation Authorities are legislated under the *Conservation Authorities Act, 1946*.

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