



Conservation Authorities Setting Challenging Targets and Streamlining Processes to Improve Client Service and Increase the Speed of Approvals

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Since April 2019, Conservation Ontario has been working with Ontario's conservation authorities (CAs) to make improvements to CA plan review and permitting activities through the [Conservation Ontario Client Service and Streamlining Initiative](#). The Initiative was created to support actions outlined in the provincial *Housing Supply Action plan*, and identifies a number of actions to improve client service and accountability, increase speed of approvals and reduce red tape to help the Province address the lack of housing supply, while at the same time not jeopardizing public health and safety or the environment in the process.

CHALLENGING TARGETS SET FOR CA REVIEWS and REGULAR REPORTING TO MEASURE RESULTS

To support timely reporting of CA Section 28 permit application reviews, Conservation Ontario developed a template which outlines a consistent reporting framework for permit review and approval timelines. Consistent with the new "Client Service Standards for Conservation Authority Plan and Permit Review", the template identifies "best practice" timelines which were developed in response to industry concerns regarding timeliness of CA approvals.

These "best practice" timelines represent a significant overall reduction compared to Provincial expectations described in the *Policies and Procedures for Conservation Authority Plan Review and Permitting* (MNRF, 2010), including a 52% reduction in the overall timeline for major permit applications and 42% for minor permit applications.

Conservation Ontario worked with a group of 14 high-growth CAs to prepare reports consistent with the reporting framework outlining their progress towards meeting the 'best practice' timelines for the first quarter of 2020.

FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE RESULTS

From January 1st – March 31st, 2020 the high-growth CAs issued a combined total of 1077 permits. The CAs were highly successful in issuing permits within the provincial timelines and the CO best-practice timelines. 12 high-growth CAs issued over 96% of all permits within the Provincial timelines, and over 92% within the CO best practice timelines.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: PRE-CONSULTATION GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

For permits issued outside of the timelines, CAs identified constraints which contributed to the small percentage of permits not meeting the targeted review times. Many CAs cited the need to increase uptake in pre-consultation processes and improve the quality of submissions to ensure a faster review and approval timeframe.

To address these constraints and continue to increase the speed of CA approvals, Conservation Ontario is developing a pre-consultation guidance document which outlines best practices for pre-consultation between CAs and their clients. Through a more robust pre-consultation process, CAs can ensure that all necessary information is received from clients to process permit applications in a timely manner with minimal resubmissions.

COMING SOON: ANNUAL REPORTING

Beginning in 2021, the high-growth CAs will post annual reports to their websites on their permit review and approval timelines. In the meantime, Conservation Ontario is committed to working with Ontario's conservation authorities to improve client service, increase the speed of approvals and reduce red tape, while continuing to protect public health and safety, and, the environment.

For more information:

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