



Conservation Authorities Continue to Demonstrate their Commitment to Improving Client Service and Streamlining

October 5th, 2021

Since April 2019, Conservation Ontario (CO) 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.

CONSERVATION ONTARIO GUIDELINES, TEMPLATES AND TOOLS IN SUPPORT OF CA PLANNING AND PERMITTING PROGRAMS

The following support material was prepared by CO in consultation with conservation authorities and representatives from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON), the Ontario Home Builders Association (OHBA) and the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD).

- [Template for Conservation Authority Planning Comments](#) (Endorsed September 30, 2019)
- [Guideline for CA Fee Administration Policies for Plan Review and Permitting](#) (Endorsed December 9, 2019)
- [CA-Municipality MOU Template for Planning and Development Reviews](#) (Endorsed December 9, 2019)
- [Client Service Standards for Conservation Authority Plan and Permit Review](#) (Endorsed December 9, 2019)
- [Guideline for Conservation Authority Pre-Consultation \(for planning and permitting applications\)](#) (Endorsed September 28, 2020)

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE CLIENT-CENTRIC CA REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS CHECKLIST

As of November, 2019, the 14 high-growth CAs have implemented a publicly accessible consistent, client-centric CA review and approval process checklist of agreements, policies, reports and tools that guide CA reviews and decision-making. The intent of the checklist is to provide a consistent level of publicly accessible information on CA websites, and provide overall transparency of process and rules. Each CAs' checklist includes:

- CA / Municipal MOUs or Technical Service Agreements
- CA Fee Policies and Schedules

- CA Plan Review and Regulation Approvals Policies / Guidelines
- CA Complete Application Requirements
- CA Client Service Standards Commitment / Policy
- CA Annual Report on Review Timelines
- CA Online Screening Maps

In addition to the 14 high-growth CAs, 13 additional CAs have since volunteered to work towards implementation of the client-centric checklist as a best practice, demonstrating a commitment to ongoing client service process improvements. These CAs will work towards full implementation of this checklist, as resources allow.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT – CHALLENGING TARGETS SET FOR CA REVIEWS

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 “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.

The “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* (NDMNR, 2010), including a 52% reduction in the overall timeline for major permit applications and 42% for minor permit applications.

Where these ambitious timelines were not met, the exceedances were often minor in nature (five days or less). Exceedances were generally related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including initial processing and staffing challenges and increased permit application volumes; as well as challenges with CA tracking systems and requests to review planning-related applications first.

2020 PERFORMANCE RESULTS

From January 1st – December 31st, 2020, the high-growth CAs issued a combined total of 6652 permits. The CAs were highly successful – issuing 91% of permits within the provincial timelines and 83% within the significantly reduced CO best practices timelines.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: INCREASING SPEED OF APPROVALS

Conservation authorities have noted that tracking their Section 28 review timeliness has allowed them to make improvements to their staffing complement, application processing procedures, timeline tracking systems and more to improve Section 28 permit review timeliness moving forward.

For more information:

Leslie Rich, Policy and Planning Liaison
 Conservation Ontario
 120 Bayview Parkway, Newmarket ON L3Y 3WE
 (705) 716-6174
lrich@conservationontario.ca