



# NOTICE OF MEETING

**DATE:** November 27, 2025

**TIME:** 4:00 pm

**LOCATION:** Hybrid Meeting

## AGENDA

### MEETING:

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### MEMBERS:

Randy Barber, Mark Lovshin, Vicki Mink, Miriam Mutton, Lance Nachoff, Adam Pearson, Tracy Richardson, Joan Stover, Willie Woo, Margaret Zwart

1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Call to Order

#### Land Acknowledgement

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we gather is situated within the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississauga's and Chippewa's of the Anishinabek, known today as the Williams Treaties First Nations. Our work on these lands acknowledges their resilience and their longstanding contribution to the area. We are thankful for the opportunity to live, learn and share with mutual respect and appreciation.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest
3. Minutes of Last Meeting – **October 16, 2025 – attached**
4. Adoption of the Agenda

5. Delegations:  
None.
6. Presentations:
  - a) Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee (RUC) Annual Report - **staff report attached**
  - b) Ganaraska Forest Year In Review – **staff report attached**
7. Business Arising from Minutes:
  - a) 2026 Municipal Levy Vote – **staff report attached**
8. Correspondence:
  - a) 03/25 Charlotte Batty email re: Mountain Biking Access – **action required**
  - b) 04/25 Julie Hunt email re: Ganaraska Forest – **action required**
  - c) 05/25 Essex Conservation re: Resolution 90/25 (Bill 68 and ERO Posting 025-1357) – **note and file**
  - d) 06/25 United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry re: Resolution 2025-159 – **note and file**
9. Applications under Ontario Regulation 41/24 and *Conservation Authorities Act*:  
Permits approved by Executive - **schedule attached**  
  
Permit applications requiring Board of Directors discussion:  
None
10. Committee Reports:
  - a) Ganaraska Forest Recreation Users Committee Minutes – November 6, 2025 - **attached**
11. New Business:
  - a) Regulated Areas Mapping Update – **staff report attached**
  - b) *CA Act* Amendments as per Bill 68 Update – **staff report attached**
12. Other Business:  
None.
13. Public Question Period - **Agenda Items Only**
  - All questions are to be submitted the day before by 4:00 pm in advance of the Board of Directors meeting in order to allow staff to prepare the answers to the questions. The Chair has discretion for questions on the day of the meeting.
  - A maximum of 10 minutes will be allotted for the Question Period. More time can be allocated at the discretion of the Chair.
  - Persons wishing to ask a question must state their name and address for the record.

- Questions will be restricted to only those items listed on the agenda.
  - Questions cannot be asked on “In Camera” items.
  - Questions cannot be asked with respect to minutes of Board of Directors meetings or committee meetings.
  - All persons will speak respectfully when asking the question.
  - The Chair may conclude the Question Period prior to the ten (10) minute time limit, where attendees are disobeying the Rules of Order, or a decision of the Chair, or where there are no questions.
14. In Camera:
- a) Recommendation that the Board of Directors meeting to move to in camera to address matters pertaining to personal information regarding an identifiable individual, including authority staff.
15. Adjourn

Please Note: **A Source Protection Authority meeting will follow the Board of Directors meeting.**

# GANARASKA REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

## MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

October 16, 2025 (Hybrid)

GRCA 05/25

---

### 1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Call to Order

The Chair called the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) Board of Directors meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vicki Mink, Chair - Municipality of Port Hope  
Randy Barber, Vice-Chair - Town of Cobourg  
Mark Lovshin - Township of Hamilton  
Miriam Mutton - Town of Cobourg  
Lance Nachoff - Township of Cavan Monaghan  
Adam Pearson - Municipality of Port Hope  
Tracy Richardson - City of Kawartha Lakes  
Joan Stover - Township of Alnwick/Haldimand  
Margaret Zwart - Municipality of Clarington  
Willie Woo - Municipality of Clarington

**ALSO PRESENT:** Linda Laliberte, CAO/Secretary-Treasurer  
Cory Harris, Watershed Services Coordinator  
Ken Thajer, Planning and Regulations Coordinator  
Ian Jeffrey, GIS/Remote Sensing Specialist

**ABSENT WITH  
REGRETS:**

**ALSO ABSENT:**

### Land Acknowledgement

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we gather is situated within the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississauga's and Chippewa's of the Anishinabek, known today as the Williams Treaties First Nations. Our work on these lands acknowledges their resilience and their longstanding contribution to the area. We are thankful for the opportunity to live, learn and share with mutual respect and appreciation.

### 2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None.



3. Minutes of Last Meeting**GRCA 34/25****MOVED BY:** Randy Barber  
**SECONDED BY:** Adam Pearson

**THAT** the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority approve the minutes of the September 18, 2025, meeting.

**CARRIED.**

4. Adoption of the Agenda**GRCA 35/25****MOVED BY:** Tracy Richardson  
**SECONDED BY:** Adam Pearson

**THAT** the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority adopt the agenda.

**CARRIED.**

5. Business Arising from Minutes:

None.

6. Delegations

None.

7. Presentations

## a) GeoAI Project

Ian Jeffrey, GIS/Remote Sensing Specialist, provided the Board of Directors with an overview of the GeoAI Land Cover Project. The project is funded by the Federal government, the NoVo Foundation and the Peter Gilgan Foundation. The presentation outlined the focus of the work which will be to develop an approach to use AI and field surveys to train the software to conduct detailed land cover mapping within the GRCA watershed. If additional funding is available in the future, there is the potential to apply the technology to undertake detailed land cover mapping across 13 conservation authorities within and around the Greater Toronto (Toronto) Bioregion, as well as providing mapping and modelling support to additional bioregions in South America and the United States. The team at GRCA is working with the Legacy Project and Dr. Dan Longboat of Trent University, to develop the program using the principle of 'Two-Eyed Seeing' to incorporate both Indigenous and western knowledges.

**GRCA 36/25****MOVED BY:** Joan Stover  
**SECONDED BY:** Lance Nachoff

**THAT** the Board of Directors receive the staff report and presentation for information.

**CARRIED.**

8. Correspondence

02/25 Michael Henderson email re: Ganaraska Forest & Mountain Bikes

The Board of Directors requested an update at the next Board meeting on the status of the

single track trails and an opening date for more trails.

**GRCA 37/25**

**MOVED BY:** Randy Barber  
**SECONDED BY:** Adam Pearson

**THAT** the Board of Directors forward the correspondence to the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee.

**CARRIED.**

9. Applications under Ontario Regulation 41/24 and *Conservation Authorities Act*:

Permits approved by Executive:

**GRCA 38/25**

**MOVED BY:** Mark Lovshin  
**SECONDED BY:** Margaret Zwart

**THAT** the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority receive the permits for information.

**CARRIED.**

Permit Application requiring Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority Board of Directors discussion:

None.

10. Committee Reports:

None.

11. New Business:

a) 2026 Preliminary Budget and Municipal Levy

**GRCA 39/25**

**MOVED BY:** Tracy Richardson  
**SECONDED BY:** Willie Woo

**THAT** the Board of Directors receive the 2026 Preliminary Budget for information and,

**FURTHER THAT** the budget be forwarded to the watershed municipalities, indicating in the cover letter, that the vote to approve the 2026 levy will be taken at the November 27, 2025 Board of Directors meeting.

**CARRIED.**

12. Other Business

None.

13. Public Question Period

None.

14. In Camera

None.

15. Adjourn

**GRCA 40/25**

**MOVED BY:** Randy Barber

**THAT** the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

**CARRIED.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CHAIR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CAO/SECRETARY-TREASURER**

**STAFF REPORT – November 27, 2025**

**TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors**


**RE: Ganaraska Forest Recreation Users Committee (RUC) Annual Report**

As part of the Terms of Reference of the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee (RUC) under the heading Reporting Function, it is stated that the RUC Chair or designate, other than staff, shall report to the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) Board on its activities, over the previous year, by the end of the year. Bob Gallagher, Chair of the RUC, will be presenting the attached report to Board of Directors.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the GRCA Board of Directors receive the presentation for information.

**Recommended by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda J. Laliberte', written over a horizontal line.

**Linda J. Laliberte, CPA, CGA  
CAO/Secretary-Treasurer**

# **Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee**

## **Report from the Chair**

Prepared by Bob Gallagher

13 November 2025

### **INTRODUCTION**

2025 is my first full year chairing the Recreational Users Committee, having assumed my duties mid-year last year.

It has been a pleasure chairing the meetings, getting to know the members, learning the committee process and watching the committee and staff come together to improve and support the public's recreational uses of the forest. I have been impressed with the seriousness with which the members have taken their responsibilities, and appreciate the staff support provided by Pam and Ed.

We had only three meetings this year (April, September and November). The June meeting was cancelled for reasons I still don't know, nor was I part of the decision to cancel it. My request to have it rescheduled were rejected.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

In all three meetings there was good attendance from members.

The things I have tried to encourage by my role as chair have been: establishing a welcoming environment, increasing participation during the meetings, increasing the issues that get discussed, and setting a tone that encourages members to bring their issues and ideas into the committee meetings.

The membership has remained very consistent over the years, with only one change of a member this year. This has both benefits and downsides. There is a good institutional memory on the committee that gives decision-making a good perspective. On the other hand, there tends to be an over reliance and acceptance of status quo ways rather than innovative new ideas.

### **ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

A membership issue I raised in last year's report which I believe is still worth the Board of Directors' attention is the suggestion of adding additional representatives on the committee from additional user groups.

Regarding the most recurring set of issues, namely trail maintenance, I want to start by expressing the committee's appreciation to staff for taking the initiative of producing and planning a signage roll-out starting on the colour loops and extending throughout the forest. The fact that this is starting has been warmly welcomed by the members of the committee.

I believe maintenance and openness of the trails remains the most recurring area of concern for user groups. As I mentioned in last year's report, I think making systemic progress on this issue will take work outside the four-meetings-a-year format of the Recreational Users Committee. Such an initiative would need to come from the Board of Directors or the staff.

### **RUC VISABILITY AND AWARENESS**

The Recreational Users Committee has many strengths, but I believe its biggest weakness is my third observation from last year's report:

For the last three years. I have ridden my horse on an almost daily basis in non-winter month, primarily in the East forest. During this time, I have gotten to know many people who use the forest. I am struck by four things that I hear almost universally: 1) they LOVE the forest and believe it is a blessing to them to have access to it; 2) they love the multi-user feature of the forest; **3) they have no idea about the Recreational Users Committee or what it does**; and 4) they don't think the trails are as well-kept as they use to be.

I raise this concern again not simply because more awareness and involvement in the Recreational Users Committee would benefit the functioning of the committee's work, but because many of the potential benefits of a user's committee to the GRCA (namely, a bigger base of support to draw on, a larger network of organizations and individuals that know and understand the value of the GRCA, and potentially a larger donor and volunteer base from user groups and their networks) are not realized. This is not so much a concern as it is a missed valuable opportunity.

In this area, I thank the staff for plans to make the RUC more visible on the website.

I want to thank the Board for the opportunity to chair this committee. With all its frustrations, it is a pleasure.

Sincerely,  
Bob Gallagher  
Recreational Users Committee, Chair

Email: [bob@bobgallagher.ca](mailto:bob@bobgallagher.ca)  
Phone: 416-434-2221

**STAFF REPORT – November 27, 2025**

**TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors**

**RE: Ganaraska Forest Year in Review**

Pam Lancaster, Conservation Lands Coordinator will be giving a PowerPoint presentation highlighting projects and initiatives undertaken in 2025 within the Ganaraska Forest. Planned initiatives for 2026 will also be highlighted.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority receives the Ganaraska Forest Year in Review presentation for information.

**Prepared by:**



---

**Pam Lancaster, B.Sc.  
Conservation Lands Coordinator**

**Recommended by:**



---

**Linda J. Laliberte, CPA, CGA  
CAO / Secretary-Treasurer**

## Staff Report – November 27, 2025

**To: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors**

**Re: 2026 Municipal Levy Vote**

The proposed 2026 preliminary budget and levy were forwarded to all municipalities on October 17, 2025. The package included a letter, which indicated that the decision on the 2026 levy would be made at the November 27, 2025 board meeting. The budget criteria approved at the September meeting included an increase to the base levy of 3.0% to \$17,462.20 and the overall levy was increased by 3.0%. An allowance was also built in for a 3.0% increase in the salary grid to be effective January 1, 2026. All increases in levies are adjusted by the increase or decrease in the apportionments provided by the Ministry which will result in further increases or decreased to the municipalities. These amounts were outlined in the October 17, 2025 letters to the municipalities.

At the November 27, 2025 Board of Directors' meeting, the members will be asked to vote on the 2026 levy in the amount of \$1,357,798. This will be a recorded vote and done by weighted average. Where there are two representatives from a municipality, the weight assigned to that municipality is distributed to each representative equally and is not redistributed should a representative not be in attendance at the meeting. Please note the weights assigned to each municipality are as listed below. The apportionment percentages are set by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs as part of the current value assessment.

It should be noted that Ontario Regulation 402/22 Budget and Apportionment Levies under the *Conservation Authorities Act* states:

*19(5) Municipality shall not have a weighted vote of more than 50 per cent of the total weighted value for all of the votes to be cast unless the municipality appoints more than 50 per cent of the members to the authority.*

Therefore, the appointment for the Municipality of Clarington will be capped at 50% and the remaining 1.9379% is redistributed among the other six municipalities by the appointment assigned.

Members must be present to vote; a proxy vote is not allowed. The resolution must receive 51% of the vote present to be carried.



	<b>CVA Apportionment</b>	<b>Voting Apportionment</b>
Municipality of Clarington	51.9379%	50.0000% (25.0% each)
Town of Cobourg	20.4329%	21.2568% (10.6284% each)
Municipality of Port Hope	16.0773%	16.7255% (8.3627% each)
Township of Alnwick/Haldimand	0.9369%	0.9747%
Township of Hamilton	10.3308%	10.7473%
Township of Cavan Monaghan	0.1982%	0.2062%
City of Kawartha Lakes	0.0860%	0.0895%

Board members are encouraged to contact the CAO/Secretary-Treasurer to answer any questions as it relates to the apportionment in advance of the meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the GRCA Board of Directors approve the 2026 Municipal Levy Vote staff report that includes the 2026 levy in the amount of \$1,357,798 and a 3.0% increase in the salary grid effective January 1, 2026.

Prepared by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Linda J. Laliberte, CPA, CGA  
CAO/Secretary-Treasurer

**From:** Charlotte Batty <[charlotte@miniiadventures.com](mailto:charlotte@miniiadventures.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 27, 2025 1:01 PM  
**To:** Info <[info@grca.on.ca](mailto:info@grca.on.ca)>  
**Cc:** [gannyenduro@gmail.com](mailto:gannyenduro@gmail.com) <[gannyenduro@gmail.com](mailto:gannyenduro@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Mountain Biking Access

Hello Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority Management and Recreational User Committee - Ontario Cycling Association Representative,

I enjoyed the Ganny Enduro mountain bike race on October 5th which used the Ganaraska Forest. I travelled from Minden to attend this event and loved being back in the Ganaraska Forest.

I would like to see more previously available singletrack in the Ganaraska Forest open to mountain bikers in the future, and for mountain bikers to have greater access to additional singletrack than is currently offered.

Happy trails,



**Charlotte Batty**  
Minii Adventures MTB Experiences  
Chief Experience Officer  
[MiniiAdventures.com](http://MiniiAdventures.com)  
705-441-6221  
@Minii\_Adventures  
@Minii Adventures  
@MiniiAdventures

**From:** Julie Hunt <[pjhunt@live.ca](mailto:pjhunt@live.ca)>

**Sent:** November 10, 2025 5:06 PM

**To:**

**Subject:** Ganaraska Forest

Largest Block of Contiguous Forest in Southern Ontario – 11,000 Acres

I've written several letters to representatives of my area with the hope that someone would listen to what is happening to our beautiful Ganaraska Forest. My husband and I, like most of our neighbours, purchased property as close to the Ganaraska Forest as possible to enjoy its many outdoor benefits. The cost of living near the forest is high, property was expensive to purchase, and our reality taxes are well over \$8,000.00 and rising.

When we first moved into the area in 2015, we were able to enjoy the Ganaraska Forest with its many single-track trails and double wide trails. Many of the trails were clearly marked with signs which coordinated with maps available to purchase. It was fun for so many to enjoy the forest on horseback, hiking, mountain biking, bird watching, etc. using the trail system to safely go through the entire forest, East, Central and West. In 2018 we, like many of our neighbours, took the time to participate in the development of the Forest Management Plan and were encouraged to see our friends, neighbours and many users' groups cooperate in maintaining the concept of the multi-use public forest. We understood that we would continue to use the forest in much the same way as we had become accustomed to for many more years.

In 2022 when the big windstorm went through Southern Ontario, we understood it damaged the forest and we accepted what the GRCA said in their press releases that the forest would be temporarily closed while they undertook the work to clean up and re-open the trails. When we were finally given the go ahead to re-enter the forest we discovered that the trails were not open, that not only had they not cleared them, but they had also intentionally blocked them, they had built gates, fences, and piled brush debris, changed the forest map and that they intended to permanently change the forest. None of this seemed remotely related to the storm damage.

The Central Forest was non-motorized, which allowed equestrians to drive to the Forest Centre, park in the horse trailer parking lot where they could ride out into the many trails, single-track and double wide. There were also paddocks where you could put your horse in so you could use the Forest Centre Facilities, knowing they were safely confined. Today, that is no longer possible. My friend and I trailered our horses to the Central Forest Labour Day Weekend. We were very disappointed to find the horse parking lot was not as it had been a few years ago. The road in was almost unpassable, the grass was high, not cut, the portable potty, picnic table, and mounting blocks were gone. The one hitching post left was covered with poison ivy and vines, unusable. Trails leading out into the forest were all closed off with either orange plastic fencing or brush debris. Signs marked Trail Closed. Now there is only one exit from the parking lot which leads to the Orange cross country ski trail. As we rode our horses through the Central Forest, there were no signs designating the trails as they were there for many years, the signs were removed. Trails were either fenced off with more orange fencing and marked closed or so heavily covered in stumps and brush debris, they were unpassable. We met up with a young father and his son who were hiking through the forest. The father stopped us and asked us where the hiking trails were; he was unable to find them, no signs. He told us he had enjoyed the forest in his early 20's and had brought his son to hike the trails and could not believe there were only double wide available. He had hoped to bring his family here to enjoy hiking outdoors but there was no point since they were gone. This is true. We rode around the Central Forest only to find all single-track signs gone and the only trails open were

the cross country double wide tracks, orange and purple. This was a long weekend and this father and son were the only ones we saw in the forest. Previously when we would ride here the forest was humming with people horseback riding, hiking, biking...all enjoying the beauty of the outdoors. It is apparent that not only did the GRCA put no effort into clearing the damage on single track they have actively tried to close them, both by blocking the entrances with fences or large debris piles but also by piling debris on the trails during logging operations. We have witnessed this in both the East and West forest in the last two years after logging and it is very obvious intentional.

So, the Central Forest is effectively closed. There is little reason for anyone other than cross-country skiers to use it now. The signs are gone, the trails are closed and/or destroyed by brush debris placed at trail entrances to keep people from using them.

The East and West forests are multi-use and with the hard work of many individuals (mostly dirt bike riders), many of the single-track trails that are once again open. However, all signage that has been there for many years has been removed. The maps have been changed and do not show the many single-track trails that have existed for many years, single track is now labeled "unmaintained". Most trails are only open and available because of the hard work of the individual users trying to maintain safe and open trails, apparently with no cooperation or help from the GRCA. In fact, we have seen trail signage has been put up labeling the trails by name, use and direction only to see them inexplicably disappear soon after.

I've joined the Great Prine Trail Riders hoping to offer support in keeping our Gananaska Forest open. Its members seem to be long-term users of the Gananaska Forest and know the trails well; they are attempting to coordinate efforts to maintain trails for the safe use and enjoyment of not only for their members but all users. I appreciate that they seem alone in their struggle to keep the forest open according to the Gananaska Forest Management Plan 2018–2038 which should be everyone's goal. So, if you were to enter the forest today, especially the Central Forest, and you were not familiar with the trails of 2015, you would not see where trails have been closed or understand why so many are upset with the closures. The Central Forest no longer has anything to offer anyone wanting to enjoy the outdoors. I question the value of the permit that the GRCA sells given their recent approach to the long-standing uses many of us have enjoyed. It appears to me that the user groups and individuals should join with the dirt bikers as the best way now to open the trails in the Central Forest as they seem to have taken the task of managing the trails where the GRCA staff have left a vacuum.

It's up to you. The Forest belongs to you and me, it has been a wonderful recreational resource for many years, and has been an economic engine for real estate, agricultural and recreation. Each of you representing your area and the users of the Gananaska Forest are responsible for ensuring the forest remains open and that management is following the Gananaska Forest Management Plan 2018-2038. This is a crisis.

Shame on you if you let them continue to purposely close the forest due to intentional neglect despite the public process and plan that they and we agreed would govern the management of the forest for many more years.

Julie Hunt  
9399 Wright Road  
Campbellcroft LOA 1B0





Wednesday, November 19, 2025

**Re: Resolution 90/25 (Bill 68 and ERO Posting 025-1257)**

---

On October 31, 2025, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) circulated a media release "[Ontario Creating New Conservation Authority Agency to Improve Service Delivery and Protect Communities](#)" outlining the intention to establish a new provincial board-governed agency to provide leadership, governance, and strategic direction to Conservation Authorities (CAs) across the province. You can [view the Minister's media conference here](#). Conservation Authorities across the province only learned of the province's intention an hour before its announcement, meaning that this consolidation plan was developed in the absence of any consultation or discussion with those with decades of watershed knowledge and boots-on-the-ground experience.

On November 6, 2025, [Bill 68, Plan to Protect Ontario Act \(Budget Measures\), 2025 \(No. 2\)](#) was introduced in the Ontario legislature and passed first reading. It is anticipated that second and third readings will occur in the next weeks, and the bill will be enacted in early December 2025. Schedule 3 of Bill 68 contains language to amend the Conservation Authorities Act with provisions for the creation of the *Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency* and outlines the objects, governance structure, funding model, etc. of this new agency.

On November 7, 2025, the MECP posted [ERO #025-1257 Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities](#) for a commenting period ending December 22, 2025. This proposal consolidates Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities into just 7 regional conservation authorities.

Ontario's Conservation Authorities are watershed-based agencies (meaning that the boundaries have regard for geographic significance that may not adhere to municipal boundaries). A map depicting the [new proposed regional conservation authorities](#) clearly indicates the broad areas encompassed with these proposed changes, which far surpass local watershed-based areas.

The formation of regional Conservation Authorities may have significant impacts for a broad number of local stakeholders in all consolidated regions. No specific evidence-based analysis has been provided to necessitate or justify a larger, regional conservation authority or the need for a distinct and separate provincial agency providing oversight, that historically was the responsibility of a specific ministry. Not only will this consolidation result in exorbitant costs related to dissolution of 36 authorities, the development of, and migration to shared systems (IT, Finance, HR etc.), but it will add an additional layer of cost and complexity.

If the province is intending to proceed in a transparent fashion, then those boards and agencies (36 Conservation Authorities) currently engaged in integrated watershed management should participate in a fulsome consultation process, prior to this legislation proceeding to second and third readings. At this time, there is no consultation beyond the ERO, which is proposing boundaries for the new regional entities. There are serious concerns and many questions that have been asked and remain unanswered, including:

- the funding mechanism for the new provincial oversight agency.
- the new governance model and potentially inadequate local representation on a regional board.
- the merging of disparate policies, for distinctly different watersheds, into a "one-size-fits-all" policy framework, that could dilute and negate site-specific management approaches in favor of overarching policies that span diverse watersheds.
- the centralization of programs and services, which are currently customized and responsive to local needs, conditions, priorities and funding opportunities.
- the impacts on administrative and support staff and how "redeployment" will work, practically and logically.
- the impacts to the related charitable foundations, specifically those with narrow objects supporting their geographically limited conservation authority.
- the impact of dissolution on each of the applicable existing conservation authorities and implications under the Income Tax Act for authorities who are also registered charities.
- the ultimate transfer of assets such as property and other significant assets (infrastructure dams, dykes, power generation, etc.) currently owned by 36 autonomous bodies

Under the new proposed Lake Erie Region Conservation Authority, approximately 81 municipal parties could not hope to reasonably have a voice that the ERO posting attempts to describe, that being, "...under consolidation the new regional conservation authorities would remain independent organizations operating with municipal governance and oversight, in accordance with requirements under the Conservation Authorities Act...". It is a geographic impossibility that the interests of the Windsor-Essex-Pelee region would be of interest, concern or familiar to a land-locked geographical extent up to 300 kms distant.

ERCA currently has a Board of Directors comprised of 9 member municipalities represented by 19 elected officials (4 from our largest municipality, 2 from each of our county municipalities and 1 from the Township of Pelee). This local governance model ensures accountability and transparency to the local ratepayers and councils who fund the majority of the operational budget for the mandatory programs and services of the Essex Region Conservation Authority. If proposed governance maintains a similar calculation for regional representation, the ultimate board size would be completely unwieldy.

As the province moves forward with plans for amalgamation, we would like to see the province commit to:

- actual, full consultation with municipalities regarding funding both the Agency and the new potential regional conservation authority.
- maintaining a strong local voice that is both accountable to the ratepayer and able to provide transparent and timely responses to inquiries, applications and programs for this local watershed.

- maintaining local expertise that is knowledgeable and can implement programming at an appropriate watershed extent.
- maintaining local offices / branches to operate, reporting to a larger Regional office.
- clarity on the path forward for those conservation authorities with foundations.
- transparently providing actual costing of potential costs for amalgamation/consolidation.

Attached to this correspondence is a resolution passed by the ERCA Board of Directors at a meeting held November 13, 2025.

Stakeholders are encouraged to review the information provided in the links in this letter and provide comments through the posting [ERO #025-1257 Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities](#), well in advance of the **closing date of December 22, 2025**.

Should you require further information, please contact me by email at [admin@erca.org](mailto:admin@erca.org).

Regards,



Molly Allaire  
Chair, Essex Region Conservation Authority

**Attached:** ERCA Board Resolution 90/25, November 13, 2025

**CC:** The Honourable Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks  
Andrew Dowie, MPP (Windsor-Tecumseh); Anthony Leardi MPP (Essex);  
Hon. Trevor Jones MPP (Chatham-Kent-Leamington); Lisa Gretzky MPP (Windsor West)  
Local Municipal Councils  
Chief Nikki van Oirschot, Caldwell First Nation  
Chief Leela Thomas, Walpole Island First Nation  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Conservation Ontario  
Conservation Authorities in Ontario  
Local environmental groups and other stakeholders





## Proposed New Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency

### Resolution No. 90/25

---

Moved by Angelo Marignani

Seconded by Ryan McNamara

**WHEREAS** the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has posted Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 ("Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities"), proposing to reduce Ontario's 36 conservation authorities to 7 regional entities as part of a broader restructuring that would create a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized oversight and direction under the *Conservation Authorities Act*; and

**WHEREAS** under this proposal, the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) would be merged into a new "Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority" together with the:

- Lower Thames Valley CA
- St. Clair Region CA
- Upper Thames River CA
- Kettle Creek CA
- Catfish Creek CA
- Long Point Region CA
- Grand River CA

forming a single organization stretching from Windsor, Essex County and Pelee Island, through north of Waterloo region; and

**WHEREAS** the Board acknowledges and supports the Province's goals of improved efficiency, consistency and fiscal prudence in conservation delivery, but finds that the proposed "Lake Erie Region" configuration would:

1. Create a geographically vast and administratively complex entity, joining northern, rural and fast-growing southern municipalities throughout the province with little shared watershed connection or economic alignment;
2. Dilute local accountability and municipal partnership, contrary to the principle that decisions are best made closest to the communities they affect;



3. Generate substantial transition costs — including human-resources integration, governance restructuring, IT migration and policy harmonization — that would divert resources from front-line service delivery and delay measurable outcomes, contrary to the Province's own business-planning principles of value for money, cost containment and service continuity; and,
4. Risk greater uncertainty and delay for builders, developers and farmers, as local permitting offices and staff familiar with site conditions are replaced by distant regional structures, making it harder for applicants to obtain timely local advice, resolve issues or expedite housing and infrastructure approvals that support the Province's "Get It Done" agenda; and

**WHEREAS** the ERCA has already undertaken significant modernization work aligned with provincial objectives, including:

- implementation of a digital permitting and inspection system that has reduced turnaround times;
- improvements in transparency and client communication;
- data and network systems, including security and redundancy
- numerous internal reviews to identify opportunities for cost savings and efficiencies
- conversion of redundant support and non-mandatory positions to front-line mandatory service positions

demonstrating that meaningful modernization can occur within the current watershed-based governance framework; and

**WHEREAS** the Board further recognizes that the Essex Region Conservation Authority serves Southwestern Ontario communities facing vastly different climatic, hydrological and infrastructure realities, with no single river running through the Essex region by itself defining the watershed and being surrounded on three sides by water, with topography that is prairie-like and subject to coastal erosion and flood-prone areas, which would be ill-served by a larger overarching administrative structure extending over 300 kilometers to townships north of the Kitchener-Waterloo Guelph area;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The Board of Directors does not support the proposed "Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority" boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257; and
2. The Board instead endorses further provincial evaluation of a more focused specific model as a geographically coherent, cost-effective and locally accountable alternative that advances the government's priorities of efficiency, red-tape reduction and timely housing delivery; and
3. The Board requests that the Ministry engage directly with affected municipalities and conservation authorities across Southwestern Ontario most specifically, the Windsor-Essex and Pelee Island municipalities before finalizing any consolidation boundaries or legislative amendments; and
4. That this resolution, with a letter from the Chair, be forwarded to the Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations and to:
  - the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and his Opposition critics;

- local Members of Provincial Parliament;
- local Municipal Councils
- the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Conservation Ontario;
- local First Nations
- local environmental groups and other stakeholders, and
- all Conservation Authorities in Ontario

- **CARRIED**

I, Nicole Kupnicki, Manager, Human Resources & Council Services of the Essex Region Conservation Authority, do hereby certify this to be a true and complete copy of Resolution No. 90/25, passed by the Essex Region Conservation Authority Meeting of the Board of Directors on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2025.

DATED at Essex, Ontario  
this 14th day of November, 2025.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicole Kupnicki

7a)



United Counties of  
**Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry**

**RESOLUTION**

MOVED BY Councillor Densham

RESOLUTION NO 2025- 159

SECONDED BY

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Councillor Densham, written over the word "SECONDED BY".

DATE November 17, 2025

WHEREAS the Conservation Authorities Act (1946) enables municipalities to establish local conservation authorities, and when municipalities choose to form such authorities, they assume responsibility for governance and funding through the appointment of a Board of Directors and the provision of an annual levy to cover expenses;

AND WHEREAS the municipalities within Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry (SDG) established South Nation Conservation (SNC) in 1947 and the Raisin Region Conservation Authority (RRCA) in 1963;

AND WHEREAS local municipalities currently provide between 25% and 50% of total conservation authority funding, while the Province of Ontario provides approximately 3%;

AND WHEREAS municipalities have governed their respective conservation authorities for decades, tailoring programs and services to local watershed needs, maintaining accountable service standards, and ensuring fair and predictable costs for ratepayers;

AND WHEREAS conservation authorities collectively own and manage thousands of acres of land, much of which was donated by local residents and entrusted to conservation authorities as a personal legacy for long-term protection, stewardship, and the public good, with the expectation that such lands would be cared for by locally governed conservation authorities;

AND WHEREAS Bill 68 (Schedule 3) proposes the creation of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, a Crown corporation that would assume governance responsibilities and consolidate Ontario's 36 conservation authorities into seven regional authorities, with municipal cost apportionment yet to be defined;

AND WHEREAS the Province already possesses the authority to establish overarching legislation, regulations, and standards through the Conservation Authorities Act and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry calls on the Government of Ontario to maintain local, independent, municipally governed, watershed-based conservation authorities to ensure strong local

06/25

representation in decisions related to municipal levies, community-focused service delivery, and the protection and management of conservation lands;

AND FURTHER THAT while the United Counties of SDG supports provincial goals for consistent permit approval processes, shared services, and digital modernization, imposing a new top-down agency structure without strong local accountability and governance risks creating unnecessary cost, red tape, and bureaucracy, thereby undermining efficiency and responsiveness to local community needs;

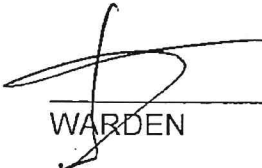
AND FURTHER THAT the United Counties of SDG supports efforts to balance expertise, capacity, and program delivery across the province, and requests that the Province work collaboratively with municipalities and local conservation authorities to determine the most effective level of strategic consolidation to achieve both provincial and local objectives.

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to the Ontario Minister of Environment, Conservation, and Parks, to the local MP and MPPs, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and all municipalities and Conservation Authorities in Ontario.

☒ CARRIED

☐ DEFEATED

☐ DEFERRED

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
WARDEN

Recorded Vote:

Councillor Bergeron	_____
Councillor Broad	_____
Councillor Densham	_____
Councillor Fraser	_____
Councillor Guindon	_____
Councillor Landry	_____
Councillor MacDonald	_____
Councillor McDonald	_____
Councillor McGillis	_____
Councillor St. Pierre	_____
Councillor Williams	_____
Warden Lang	_____

## **Conservation Authorities Act - Ontario Regulation 41/24**

**Permits approved by Executive:**

***Date: November 27, 2025***

<b>Permit No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Municipality/ Township</b>	<b>Description of Works</b>
2520-11/25	Nov 7/25	Ganaraska Road (430m east of Newtonville Rd.) Pt.Lt. 8, Conc.6&7	Clarington	Installation of a replacement culvert.
2538-10/25	Oct 9/25	7449 County Road 2 Pt.Lt. 30, Conc.A	Hamilton	Removal of topsoil and placement of gravel with existing grades to remain.
2539-10/25	Oct 21/25	448 Cottesmore Avenue Pt.Lt.14, Conc. A	Cobourg	Construction of a 2-storey, attached, non-habitable garage addition.
2540-10/25	Oct 27/25	King Street West (south side Road Allowance), adjacent #391 King Street West and east towards Forth Street	Cobourg	Relocation of existing Gas Main to allow for municipal infrastructure improvements on King Street West.
2541-11/25	Nov 7/25	Ganaraska Road (800m west of Newtonville Rd.) Pt.Lt.11, Conc.6&7	Clarington	Repair of existing box culvert.
2542-11/25	Nov 7/25	Ganaraska Road (120m east of Newtonville Rd.) Pt.Lt.8&9, Conc.6&7	Clarington	Repair of existing box culvert, and construction of a new concrete headwall.
2543-11/25	Nov 7/25	Newtonville Road (1.1km south of Ganaraska Rd.) Pt.Lt.8, Conc.6	Clarington	Installation of a temporary concrete barrier adjacent to a bridge railing.
2545-11/25	Nov 19/25	12 Covert Street Pt.Lt.17, Conc.A	Cobourg	Installation of a new gas service for a new replacement building.
2546-11/25	Nov 19/25	5504 Vickers Road Orono Pt.Lt.23, Conc.5	Clarington	Installation of a new driveway.

# MINUTES OF THE GANARASKA FOREST RECREATIONAL USERS COMMITTEE

November 6, 2025

## RUC 3/25

---

### 1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Call to Order

The Chair welcomed all present and called the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee (RUC) meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

**MEMBER PRESENT:** Bob Gallagher, Chair  
Matthew Robbins, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters  
Jim Pearson, Ontario Trail Riders Association  
Matt Mair, Ontario Nature  
Garry Niece, Hike Ontario  
Rick Trumper, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Club  
Alex Schmidt, Ontario Cycling Association  
Carolyn Richards, Ontario Federation of ATV Clubs  
Steve Brownell, Municipality of Port Hope  
Maureen McDonald, Township of Cavan Monaghan  
Karen Graham, Municipality of Clarington  
Lance Nachoff, GRCA Board of Directors

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ed Van Osch, GRCA Forest Recreation Technician  
Pam Lancaster, GRCA Conservation Lands Coordinator

**ABSENT WITH REGRETS:** Shawn Marshall, Cross Country Ski Ontario  
Amber Panchyshyn, Orienteering Ontario

**ALSO ABSENT:** Lisa Thompson, Ontario Federation of Trail Riders  
Peter Wood, Ontario Federation of 4WD Recreationists  
City of Kawartha Lakes (position unfilled)

### 2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None.

### 3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

RUC 13/25

**MOVED BY:**

Carolyn Richards

**SECONDED BY:**

Matt Mair

**THAT** the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee approve the minutes of the September 4, 2025 meeting.

**CARRIED.**

4. Adoption of Agenda

**RUC 14/25**

**MOVED BY:**

Steve Brownell

**SECONDED BY:**

Maureen McDonald

**THAT** the agenda be adopted with a Point of Information added to New Business as item D.

**CARRIED.**

5. Delegations

None

6. Presentations

None

7. Business Arising from the Minutes

Ed Van Osch provided the RUC with a verbal review of the comments received by RUC members and their respective user groups and community regarding Ganaraska Forest parking infrastructure. It was noted that many of the submitted comments align with that of the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority's (GRCA) knowledge of the infrastructure issues, challenges, and opportunities. Ed Van Osch stated that the RUC comments will be taken into consideration during property management decisions.

**RUC 15/25**

**MOVED BY:**

Steve Brownell

**SECONDED BY:**

Maureen McDonald

**THAT** the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receive the verbal report of RUC representative submitted parking lot comments presented by Ed Van Osch for information.

**CARRIED.**

8. Correspondence

An email letter was submitted to GRCA in gratitude for authorizing and facilitating a recent Special Event known as The Ganny Enduro.

**RUC 16/25**

**MOVED BY:**

Steve Brownell

**SECONDED BY:**

Matt Mair



**THAT** the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee note and file correspondence item #1.

**CARRIED.**

#### 9. New Business

##### **a) Central Forest Trail Infrastructure Improvements**

Steve Brownell inquired if GRCA had implemented GPS coordinates or What3Words on newly installed trail markers within the Central Forest. Ed Van Osch informed the RUC that new signage is intended to be utilized as wayfinding signage and has been installed at standard 50 or 75 metre intervals along trails within the Central Forest.

Steve Brownell inquired to the possibility of RUC members or volunteers being authorized to assist with blaze signage installation. Pam Lancaster stated that volunteer opportunities do exist, and signage installation can be included as a volunteer opportunity. Further to that, Pam Lancaster stated that staff has nearly completed the signage installation for this project and no further signage is to be installed at this time.

Alex Schmidt asked to see an example of the blaze signage. Pam Lancaster presented signage examples to the RUC. Bob Gallagher questioned what material the signs are made of and how are they installed. Jim Pearson asked if the signs could withstand UV light. Pam Lancaster informed the RUC that the signage is constructed of PVC and that although it will deteriorate over the years, that the material is a cost-effective way of supporting navigation in the Forest. Signage has been installed on trees using aluminum nails or mounted on T-bars in areas without suitable trees and that aluminum nails were chosen to limit the risk of future safety hazards during logging or maintenance procedures.

Alex Schmidt asked if GRCA has plans to incorporate map signage within the trail system. Pam Lancaster stated, "decision making" signage will be added to the trail system to assist users with navigation and that GRCA is taking inspiration from other organizations with successful trail systems.

Alex Schmidt requested clarification on the hazardous hills and curve sections mentioned in the Staff report. Ed Van Osch explained that the hazards mentioned were in relation to the safety of cross-country skiers and staff during grooming operations.

**RUC 17/25**

**MOVED BY:**

Jim Pearson

**SECONDED BY:**

Maureen McDonald

**THAT** the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receive the Central Forest Trail Infrastructure Improvements Staff report for information.

**CARRIED.**



**b) Pre-Winter Trail Maintenance**

Jim Pearson inquired as to the amount of funds provided by Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) towards trail grading. Rick Trumper stated that OFSC provides \$4000 to \$5000 annually to the GRCA to be utilized for trail grading projects that benefit OFSC use of the Ganaraska Forest.

Bob Gallagher requested clarification on the nature of reporting trail surface degradation. Ed Van Osch stated that RUC representative should report any trail surface issues submitted to them by users to the Forest Recreation Technician. This data is collected and utilized to make maintenance decisions.

Jim Pearson inquired as to the ability of GRCA to address hazards on unmaintained municipal roads. Rick Trumper stated that OFSC communicates with the municipality to arrange maintenance where the OFSC trail uses municipal lands. Pam Lancaster stated that GRCA does not perform any maintenance on municipal owned lands, but GRCA does communicate issues reported to GRCA to municipal partners. A conversation began related to municipal right of ways, which is outside of the GRCA's jurisdictional authority.

**RUC 18/25**

**MOVED BY:**

Rick Trumper

**SECONDED BY:**

Jim Pearson

**THAT** the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee routinely approach respective users and groups to obtain information regarding the location and nature of trail surface concerns within the Ganaraska Forest;

**FURTHER THAT** The RUC routinely share collected user group information regarding trail surface concerns with the Forest Recreation Technician via email; and

**FURTHER THAT** the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receive the Pre-Winter Trail Maintenance Staff report for information.

**CARRIED.**

**c) Ganaraska Forest RUC on the GRCA Website**

Pam Lancaster stated that GRCA has taken steps to develop a place on [www.grca.on.ca](http://www.grca.on.ca) dedicated to RUC, including minutes, notifications, delegations, and RUC representative names additionally, if RUC representatives feel comfortable, RUC member contact info will be included.

Bob Gallagher thanked Pam Lancaster for GRCA's decision to act promptly by addressing this issue and requested clarification regarding security and notification protocol. Pam Lancaster stated, if requested, GRCA Staff can respond on behalf of an RUC member, additionally, staff will send a confirmation email to RUC members requesting permission to post RUC member emails on the website.

**RUC 19/25****MOVED BY:**

Steve Brownell

**SECONDED BY:**

Karen Graham

**THAT**, if desired, the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee provide a different email to be used for the email form on the GRCA website to the Forest Recreation Technician Ed Van Osch by November 14, 2025;

**FURTHER THAT** the Ganaraska Forest Recreational Users Committee receive the Ganaraska Forest RUC on the GRCA Website Staff report for information.

**CARRIED.**

**d) Changes to Conservation Authorities**

Steve Brownell requested an update regarding the provincial announcement of a proposed amalgamation of Conservation Authorities. Pam Lancaster informed the RUC members that on October 31, 2025, the Province of Ontario issued a Press Release to announce its plans to introduce changes to conservation authorities across the province. Currently, staff are not privy to any further information other than what has come from the official Ontario announcement, which can be found online on Provincial websites.

This inquiry has been recorded as a Point of Information.

10. Adjourn**RUC 20/25****MOVED BY:**

Jim Pearson

**SECONDED BY:**

Rick Trumper

**THAT** the meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

**CARRIED.**

The next meeting of the Ganaraska Forest Recreational User Committee is Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 7:00 pm.

---

**Chair**

---

**Forest Recreation Technician**

**Staff Report – November 27, 2025**

**TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors**

**RE: Regulated Areas Mapping Update**

As per Ontario Regulation 41/24, made under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, all Conservation Authorities must, at least once annually:

- a) Review regulated areas mapping and determine if updates are required,
- b) Make and file such updates to the maps at its head office if required, and
- c) Make the updated maps available to the public on its website and by any other means it considers advisable.

Where new information or analysis becomes available that may result in significant updates to the areas where development activities are prohibited under paragraph 2 of subsection 28 (1) of the *Conservation Authorities Act*, including enlargements or reductions to such areas, the authority shall ensure that stakeholders, municipalities and the public are notified of the proposed changes in any manner that the authority considers advisable, including making any relevant information or studies available online at least 30 days prior to an authority meeting during which the proposed changes are on the agenda.

Where significant changes to the areas where development activities are prohibited have been made, the authority shall promptly update the maps.

GRCA staff advise that where there is a case of a conflict regarding the boundaries of the areas where development activities are prohibited as described in the *Conservation Authorities Act*, the description of those areas in that paragraph and in section 2 of the Regulation prevail over the depiction of the areas in the maps.

GRCA staff advise that there have been no new information or analysis from April 2024 to present that would have resulted in significant updates to the GRCA regulated area. Examples of such new information or analysis that would result in significant updates would be new floodplain mapping or a shoreline management plan.

GRCA staff have undertaken updates to regulatory mapping. GRCA has a process in place to identify new regulated area or remove areas from the regulated areas mapping. GRCA's updated mapping is currently available to the public on the GRCA website.

The process that GRCA staff follow is when it is determined there is an issue with our regulated area, an edit request is made using an online tool built in SharePoint Forms, which then sends, via email, the request to the relevant GRCA coordinators for approval. After the coordinators review & approve the edit, it is automatically sent, via email, to the GIS team for correction. The edit is completed using ArcGIS Pro, then the regulation area layer is generated and shared to the coordinators for review and approval. After the edits have been confirmed, the new layer is published to make it available online.

2025 Edits:

Edits Complete	#
Major	0
Minor	23

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT** the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority receives the Regulated Areas Mapping Update for information.

**Prepared by:**



---

**Kerri Thayer, MCIP, RPP**  
**Planning & Regulations Coordinator**

**Recommended by:**



---

**Linda J. Laliberte, CPA, CGA**  
**CAO / Secretary-Treasurer**

## STAFF REPORT – November 27, 2025

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors

RE: **Bill 68, Schedule 3 Proposed Changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and Proposed Boundaries for Regional Consolidation of Ontario Conservation Authorities**

---

### Background:

Conservation Authorities provide a broad range of essential services, including flood forecasting and warning, management of flood and erosion control infrastructure, natural hazard permitting and review, drinking water source protection, low water response coordination, maintenance of conservation areas and trails, environmental education, and the implementation of restoration and climate change projects. Conservation Ontario serves as the collective association representing Ontario's Conservation Authorities.

On October 31, 2025, Minister Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, announced that the provincial government will introduce legislation to amend the *Conservation Authorities Act* to create a new provincial agency, the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA). It is proposed that the OPCA would provide centralized leadership, efficient governance, strategic direction and oversight of Ontario's conservation authorities. Since the announcement, the Government has had first reading of Bill 68 that made changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CAA) in Schedule 3 and ordered a second reading on November 6, 2025. It is anticipated a third reading will follow.

Another key action announced at this time, by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, together with the Chief Conservation Executive, is the plan to consolidate the province's 36 conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities, while maintaining alignment with watershed boundaries.

The Board of Directors of Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) has been updated on these announcements by staff via email as information has become available. This report is to look at both of these proposed changes and the implications on the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority and watershed Municipalities served.

### **1. Bill 68, Schedule 3 Proposed Changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* :**

Proposed changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* can be found at:

[Bill 68, Plan to Protect Ontario Act \(Budget Measures\), 2025 \(No. 2\) - Legislative Assembly of Ontario](#)

This report will highlight some of the proposed changes which can be found in Schedule 3, that begins at Section 35.1 with the establishment of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency.

**Establishment of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency**

A corporation known as the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) is to be established as an agent of the Crown. The OPCA would be responsible for bringing forward a major modernization of how conservation authorities operate. The *Conservation Authorities Act* changes would include identifying the objects of the OPCA as listed below in this report.

The proposed OPCA would be established as a corporation. It would not be able to register as a charity under the *Income Tax Act*. A Board of Directors, consisting of 5 to 12 members, would provide governance to the OPCA. The Board would be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and include members who are knowledgeable in matters pertinent to business operations, conservation authority knowledge, or other matters as prescribed by the regulation. Members could not be a member of Parliament and would serve a term of up to 3 years and may serve for 9 years total (does not have to be consecutive). A chair and up to two vice chairs would be identified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The Board would hold at least 4 meetings per year, and establish by-laws as needed for the conduct and management of the affairs of the Agency, operating within its purpose (objects).

The OPCA would employ, for a defined term, the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that would be appointed by the Secretary of Cabinet. Following this, the OPCA would hire successors to the position. The CEO would be responsible for the management and administration of the affairs of the OPCA, as determined in concert with the Board of Directors, and appoint employees, arrange for facilities, or other such services as may be required.

The Agency would be required to report to the Minister on its activities and effectiveness on March 31, 2029, and every subsequent 3 years.

With this proposed establishment of the OPCA by the Province, there has been no indication as to the future of Conservation Ontario that was established by conservation authorities.

**Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency Funding**

It is proposed that funding may be provided by the Minister and through the establishment of fees by the agency. The OPCA may, by notice, require the payment of fees related to any matter related to the performance of its duties and powers under the *Act*.

Further, for the purpose of recovering the costs and expenses incurred by the OPCA, the OPCA may, in accordance with any regulations, determine the amounts of the costs and expenses that the authorities collectively owe to the OPCA and apportion those amounts to the authorities.

There has been no insight as to whether this type of cost recovery obligation would be similar to the current levy paid by conservation authorities to Conservation Ontario. As well, there could be a risk that implementation of paying costs to the OPCA could increase

the costs paid by the municipalities especially if there was an increase in these costs. The current charge paid to Conservation Ontario is covered by the municipal levy for the most part.

### **Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency Objects**

The Agency would be responsible for carrying out the following 10 roles:

- Oversee the governance of authorities, their operations, programs and services and other aspects.
- Oversee the transition to a regional watershed-based framework
- Promote consistent policies, standards and fees for programs and services
- Assess and report on the effectiveness of authorities in their purpose (furthering the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in watersheds in Ontario), including outcomes related to the implementation of their programs and services.
- Oversee and evaluate the financial performance of authorities, including long-term operational and capital financial sustainability and the financial sustainability of the mandator programs and services
- Ensure alignment of conservation authorities with provincial objectives by guiding and evaluating their strategic planning
- Support the development and implementation of a standardized and centralized system for processing applications for permits
- Lead the development and implementation of digital strategies and shared services to support the operations of authorities, including their programs and services.
- Support strategic investment in programs and services provided by authorities, including leveraging funding available to Ontario and authorities.
- Advise the Government of Ontario in respect of the programs and services authorities provide under the *Act* and any matters related to the objects of the Agency

### **Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency Directions to Conservation Authorities**

The OPCA can issue direction to an Authority or Authorities and may address key performance indicators, service standards, information technology, procurement, training of members and employees, budgeting, asset management plans and strategic planning. The OPCA cannot issue a direction to an Authority until the Minister approves the direction. Conservation Authorities must comply with a direction given by the OPCA. To support implementation of such directions, the Agency may issue guidelines to the Authorities.

Conservation authorities would be required to provide information to the OPCA to further its objects, which includes information relating to its operations, employees, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations, which may include plans, reports and financial statements, including audited financial statements, and may also include personal information.

Any personal information collected would not require a notice to the individual and would be collected with the purpose of furthering the OPCA's objects. This would include information that would be considered subject to solicitor-client privilege, or confidential matters of the conservation authority. The Agency can order the publication of information collected to the conservation authorities but not any privileged or confidential information.

## **2. Proposed Boundaries for Regional Consolidation of Ontario Conservation Authorities**

On November 7, 2025, the Ontario government posted Environmental Registry Posting (ERO) Posting #025-1257 on the ERO seeking feedback on proposed boundaries for consolidation of Ontario's 36 conservation authorities into regional conservation authorities, and the criteria applied to inform proposed boundaries.

[Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities | Environmental Registry of Ontario.](#)

The consultation period is currently open and closes on December 22, 2025. Consultation topics include the delineation of regional boundaries, the governance model for the regional conservation authority boards, and strategies to ensure continuity of programs and services during the transition. The province's decision on the number and configuration of regional conservation authorities will be finalized following technical analysis and consideration of the feedback received during this consultation phase.

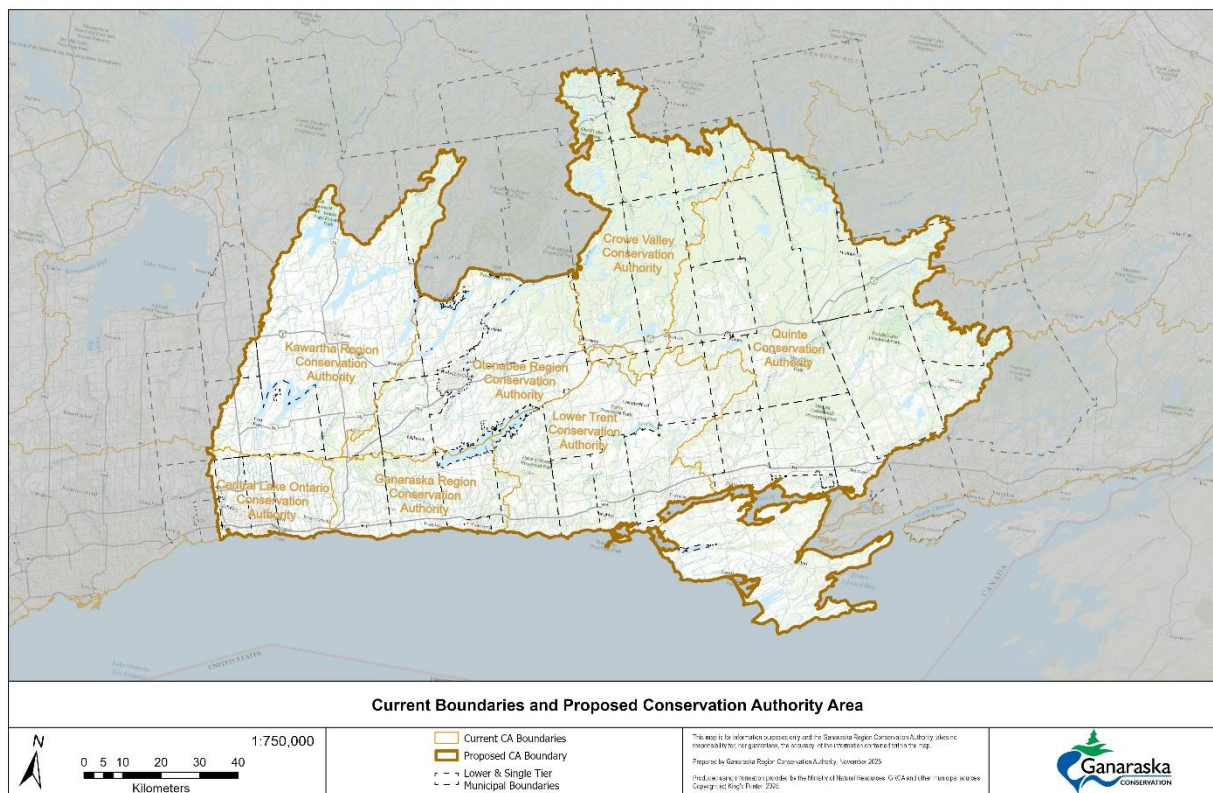
The proposal summary on the ERO reads: "Ontario is proposing changes to improve the conservation authority (CA) system to free up resources for front-line service delivery to help protect communities and better align the work of CAs with provincial priorities. This proposal seeks feedback on proposed boundaries and criteria for the regional consolidation of Ontario's 36 CAs."

The ERO further states the criteria applied for determining the proposed boundaries for regional conservation authorities are:

- maintaining watershed-based jurisdictions – aligning with natural hydrological boundaries to support effective flood and water management, consistent with drinking water Source Protection Areas and Regions.
- relationships between conservation authorities and municipalities – reducing administrative duplication and overlap for municipalities and conservation authorities to simplify accountability and strengthen local partnerships.
- balancing expertise and capacity across conservation authorities – enhancing technical skills and resources across conservation authorities to improve service and program delivery.
- service continuity – ensuring uninterrupted delivery of local conservation authority programs – including flood forecasting and warning, permitting, and source water protection – through and after consolidation.



The proposed consolidation recommends Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) becoming part of the Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority which includes watersheds draining to eastern Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte, including the Trent and Cataraqui systems. This would result in the amalgamation of seven conservation authorities. Joining Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority are Central Lake Ontario, Kawartha Region, Otonabee Region, Lower Trent Region, Crowe Valley and Quinte Region Conservation Authorities.



Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority has 7 municipalities in whole or in part within the area of jurisdiction: Municipality of Clarington, City of Kawartha Lakes, Municipality of Port Hope, Town of Cobourg, Township of Cavan Monaghan, Township of Hamilton and Township of Alnwick/Haldimand.

The proposed Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority has 48 municipalities within its jurisdiction, namely, City of Belleville, City of Kawartha Lakes, City of Oshawa, City of Peterborough, City of Pickering, City of Quinte West, County of Prince Edward County, Municipality of Brighton, Municipality of Centre Hastings, Municipality of Clarington, Municipality of Hastings Highlands, Municipality of Highlands East, Municipality of Marmora and Lake, Municipality of Port Hope, Municipality of Trent Hills, Municipality of Trent Lakes, Municipality of Tweed, Town of Ajax, Town of Cobourg, Town of Deseronto, Town of Greater Napanee, Town of Whitby, Township of Addington

Highlands, Township of Alnwick/Haldimand, Township of Asphodel-Norwood, Township of Brock, Township of Cavan Monaghan, Township of Central Frontenac, Township of Cramahe, Township of Douro-Dummer, Township of Faraday, Township of Hamilton, Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, Township of Limerick, Township of Loyalist, Township of Madoc, Township of North Frontenac, Township of North Kawartha, Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan, Township of Scugog, Township of Selwyn, Township of South Frontenac, Township of Stirling-Rawdon, Township of Stone Mills, Township of Tudor and Cashel, Township of Tyendinaga, Township of Uxbridge, and Township of Wollaston.

The chart below shows the effect of the amalgamation on the area of jurisdiction as well as the population estimates.

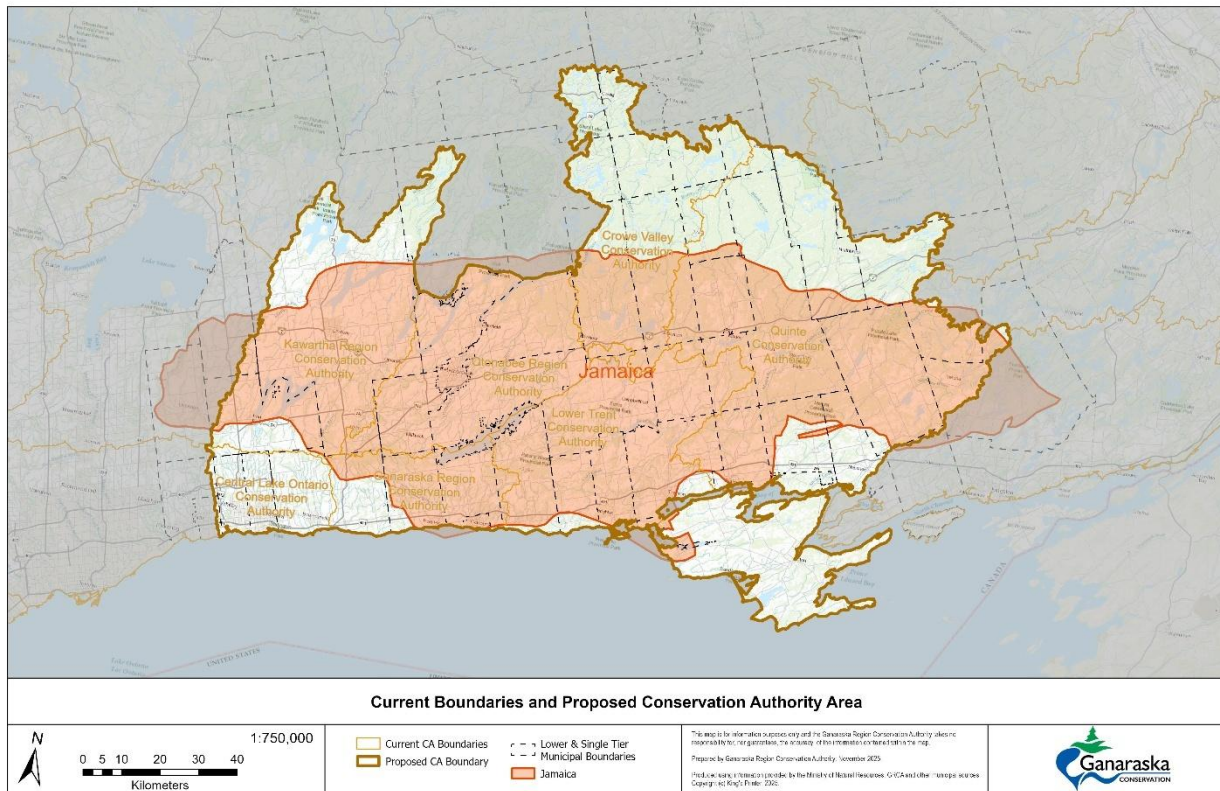
Effect of amalgamation			
Area	GRCA	ELORCA	
	929 km <sup>2</sup>	15,964 km <sup>2</sup>	16 Times larger
	2.8 times the size of PEI		
	Larger than each of Jamaica or Singapore		
	Larger than the state of Connecticut		
Population est.	GRCA	ELORCA	
	190,470	1,250,000	6.5 times larger
	Greater population than each of Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador or PEI		
Number of Municipalities	GRCA	ELORCA	
	8	48	Lower and Single Tier
	3	4	Upper Tier or Regional/District
Number of Watersheds	GRCA	ELORCA	
	9	86	

The chart shows the area as being 16 times the current jurisdiction and larger than the area covered by the island of Jamaica. The population included is more than the population of some Canadian Provinces.

It is unclear how local watershed needs, long-standing local partnerships and watershed expertise will be incorporated into the new structure. Questions have been asked as to whether there will be a change in ownership of assets to the larger regional conservation authority or possibly to the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency.

Currently, local municipalities provide just over 45% of GRCA funding, with provincial contributions making up only about 1.0 % funding. Self-generated funds and GRCA partnerships with other agencies account for more than 40% of total funding. It is unclear

on how these partnerships and funds earned by Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority would be distributed to the larger regional organization.



For nearly eight decades, local municipalities, stakeholders, partners, and community organizations have collectively invested millions of dollars into the many important watershed services such as updated floodplain mapping, long-term environmental and watershed monitoring, conservation areas and the Ganaraska Forest, restoration projects, clean water healthy lands stewardship programs, environmental education and community outreach.

Under a large regional model, local municipalities and watershed residents risk losing their voice in decisions that directly affect their communities and local natural resources. This shift could significantly alter how these essential services are delivered, funded, and prioritized, placing at risk the locally driven programs and services that have supported the health and safety of our communities for nearly 80 years.

The ERO notice lists the following discussion questions to assist in receiving feedback:

- What do you see as key factors to support a successful transition and outcome of regional conservation authority consolidation?
- What opportunities or benefits may come from a regional conservation authority framework?

- Do you have suggestions for how governance could be structured at the regional conservation authority level, including suggestions around board size, make-up and the municipal representative appointment process?
- Do you have suggestions on how to maintain a transparent and consultative budgeting process across member municipalities within a regional conservation authority?
- How can regional conservation authorities maintain and strengthen relationships with local communities and stakeholders?

**Question Considerations:**

One key factor in a successful transition is a respect for local watershed knowledge. This experience needs to be maintained and there must be mechanisms to retain and integrate local expertise, datasets, and long-standing community relationships. As well, ensuring that regionalization does not dilute and overlook watershed-specific needs, priorities, and risks.

A perceived benefit of amalgamation is a stronger, more consistent service delivery, harmonized permitting, planning reviews, flood forecasting, and regulatory processes and consistency on how watershed policies are applied. This same consistency of service delivery is possible while maintaining the current structures. This can be done by the province introducing policies and guidelines to ensure consistency without the need to amalgamate CAs. This would be a more efficient and effective manner to introduce consistent conservation authority service delivery.

With regards to suggested governance model at the regional level, thoughts may be that a 12 to 18 members Board of Directors is a manageable size that is effective. Given this, it would be very difficult to appoint members and still have the expectation of adequately representing the interests of 48 municipalities.

Within the regional conservation authority there will be various priorities and budget pressures among the 48 municipalities, which will make budget deliberations very difficult and the process may seem inequitable to some municipalities.

In order for the regional conservation authorities to maintain and strengthen relationships with local communities and stakeholders, the local offices should be maintained to be visible within the community. This will also result in watershed-specific expertise remaining locally and accessible to the residents.

The above answers to the discussion questions represents a very small sample of why consolidation on such a large scale is not the solution. What would be the purpose of consolidation which can cost millions of dollars and take years to implement, are disruptive to daily and organizational workflows, and often result in the loss of corporate knowledge and business continuity due to employee departures and reassignments with consequent impacts on customer service, workloads, and morale.

While consolidation or amalgamation may be an option for some smaller conservation authorities, it does not make sense for the GRCA which has staff expertise in every program area. The GRCA is fiscally responsible and excels in delivering services to the watershed municipalities and communities in a very cost-effective and efficient manner.

Despite claims of inefficiency by the Province, GRCA issues over 98% of permits within provincial timelines, and provincial reports as reported to Conservation Ontario.

GRCA also demonstrates how efficiencies can be furthered with staff sharing models. For many years, GRCA has shared staff with neighbouring conservation authorities which is an example of how shared-service delivery models can reduce municipal costs and improve service quality.

GRCA supports provincial goals to improve consistency and modernize digital permitting, these objectives can be achieved without removing local governance or consolidating watershed agencies into large regional organizations.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

**WHEREAS** the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority Board of Directors acknowledges and supports the Province's goals of improved efficiency of watershed management, through the implementation of digital applications and permitting system, consistent policies, flood standards, fees, and technology; and

**WHEREAS** consistent policies, and resources across the existing conservation authority boundaries could be achieved without structural consolidation through direction and tools such as technical guidelines provided by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; or Conservation Ontario; and

**WHEREAS** conservation authorities are locally-based, grassroots organizations formed by municipal governments in response to the challenges posed by a changing landscape; especially, the increased exposure to flooding and erosion hazards and the resulting risks to lives and property. In the case of GRCA, supported by its seven municipalities, this vision has proven a successful model for nearly 80 years; and

**WHEREAS** the GRCA, with the guidance and support of our seven member municipalities, demonstrates fiscal prudence in conservation delivery, ensuring stable growth through stable funding. GRCA has successfully leveraged funding to support programs and services that are locally important and are driven by community engagement through GRCA's Conservation Land Strategy and the Watershed Based Resource Management Strategy; and

**WHEREAS** GRCA consistently meets or exceeds provincial service standards, and participates in staff-sharing initiatives with neighbouring conservation authorities that already deliver many of the efficiencies the Province seeks; and



**WHEREAS** plans to regionalize conservation authorities through consolidation would dilute local accountability and municipal partnership and is contrary to the basic principle that decisions are best made closest to the communities they affect. Effective representation by municipal partners remains core to the success of conservation authorities. The GRCA, while not unique among conservation authorities in this respect, is effective in working with our community to support sustainable development, and keeping communities safe; and

**WHEREAS** being front-line means being responsive and accountable to the community by delivering the services that are essential and valued to the best interest of the community. The front-line of provincial priorities on housing, the economy, infrastructure, and climate resilience are in the decisions between municipalities working together to address issues around floodplain (and hazard) protection and resilient upland and landscape management. Further, staff and Board are responsive and accountable to the needs of the watershed community, while meeting or exceeding provincial service standards. The staff and Board are reachable through publicly available contact information. Local governance and direction combined with local service provision allows GRCA to continue to be responsive to our community; and

**WHEREAS** consolidation will result in substantial transition costs, not the least of which is time. In all facets, that would divert resources from front-line service delivery and delay desired outcomes. Further, the loss of local watershed knowledge and community relationships will add greater uncertainty, loss of trust, and delay for our watershed residents. This includes the agricultural community, businesses, builders, developers, and our municipal partners that seek timely and effective local advice, which is provided through local pre-consultation; and

**WHEREAS** a proposed regional watershed would create a geographically vast and administratively complex organization when joining the seven conservation authorities as proposed in Eastern Lake Ontario. This would be considerably worse if local offices do not remain available and accountable to its membership, partners and the communities they serve.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

**THAT** the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority Board of Directors does not support the proposed “Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration as outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257; and

**FURTHER THAT** meaningful modernization can occur within the current watershed-based governance framework; and

**FURTHER THAT** the GRCA Board endorses further provincial evaluation of a more focused specific model as a geographically coherent, cost-effective and locally accountable alternative that advances the government’s priorities of efficiency, red-tape reduction and timely home construction; and

**FURTHER THAT** the Board asks that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks engage directly with affected municipalities and conservation authorities across Eastern Lake Ontario through a working group; and

**FURTHER THAT** the Board of Directors direct staff to make a submission to the Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations asking the Province to pause any consolidation until more consultation can take place ; and

**FURTHER THAT** a letter from the Chair containing this resolution, be forwarded to:

- the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and his Opposition critics; and
- the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (CA Office); and
- Ontario's Chief Conservation Executive, Hassaan Basit; and
- Local Member of Provincial Parliament David Piccini, Northumberland – Peterborough South and
- All local watershed municipalities, all municipalities in Ontario, and Counties within GRCA 's watershed.

**Prepared by:**



---

**Linda J. Laliberte, CPA, CGA**  
**CAO/Secretary-Treasurer**