

STAFF REPORT – March 19, 2026

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors

RE: Application to WECl Program for Funds to Undertake an Environmental Assessment for Garden Hill Dam

Background

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) constructed the Garden Hill Dam on the North Ganaraska River within the village of Garden Hill in 1959. The structure was part of the construction of Northumberland County Road #9. The dam outlets within a large extended concrete box culvert road structure, with an approximate size of 12m x 12m. The original purpose of the structure was to manage flows in the North Ganaraska River, provide recreational opportunities and to provide habitat for wildlife.

The reservoir is also used by the Port Hope Fire Department as a source of water for fire suppression and a dry hydrant is accessed off of Mill Street North.

2023 Dam Inspection and Report

In 2023, GRCA received a small amount of funding from the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECl) Fund to retain a consultant to complete a formal dam inspection and prepare a summary report. The report was released in December 2023 and included a number of recommendations for the GRCA, including:

- Ongoing monitoring of dam elements, particularly the possible movement in the upstream wingwalls
- Complete a condition assessment of the concrete and prepare plans for remediation
- Prepare an updated Dam Safety Review (DSR)
- Complete a Public Safety Risk Assessment and prepare an updated Public Safety Plan
- Review safety signage
- Remove vegetation along the north embankment (ongoing)
- Relocate shoreline anchors for safety booms away from the sluiceway (completed by GRCA in 2025)
- Install additional erosion protection/stone
- Re-seal the construction joints between the upstream wingwalls and abutment walls
- Reinforce the south wall of the control building
- Replace the deteriorating stoplogs

The report included a number of recommendations for the County as well, relating to the maintenance of the road and culvert, road drainage, safety measures, etc. GRCA and County staff have been in collaborative discussions since September 2025 to explore opportunities to work together in addressing report recommendations. By working together, significant cost savings can be achieved in engineering design and construction, mobilization/demobilization, dewatering, traffic control, etc.

The report initially estimated \$253,000 in costs for GRCA to implement all of the assigned recommendations. In speaking with the County and their engineering consultant, the costs of implementing the recommendations are more realistically between \$500,000 and \$600,000.

Request for Local Funding

In the fall of 2025, GRCA approached Port Hope staff to request funding support to repair the dam and staff presented to Council on October 21, 2025. It was noted that maintaining the dam and reservoir will require significant investment now and ongoing support from the municipality into the future. If support is not available, GRCA will need to consider other long-term options in order to effectively manage risk, including giving consideration to decommissioning of the reservoir.

In January of this year, Council was considering the two previous options GRCA presented in October. However, concerns were expressed about deciding between the two options without community consultation.

Applying a Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Framework

To address this concern regarding community consultation, GRCA suggested a third option; that a WECl application be submitted to complete a Class EA to look at the various options between 'do nothing', 'repair', 'decommission', and 'decommission with various mitigation options (to mitigate loss of habitat and use of dry hydrant)'. The EA could include a Cost-Benefit analysis to confirm whether repair is worth considering in the longer term. This option was presented to Port Hope Council on February 24, 2026 in a Special Council Meeting. The Class EA approach will ensure that the public, local residents and indigenous communities are effectively engaged and involved in the process of selecting a preferred option for the future of the dam. The estimated cost to complete the study would be \$150,000+ (\$50,000 ask in both 2026 and 2027).

Port Hope Council supported the option and agreed to provide matching funding to enable the submission of an application to the WECl Program to request matching provincial funding for the study. The approving resolution indicates that funding has been authorized in the amount of \$50,000 per year for two years (2026 and 2027), totalling \$100,000 to support a Class EA for the Garden Hill Dam to evaluate repair and decommissioning alternatives, subject to a

successful application to the WECl program. A copy of the resolution is attached to this report.

Submitting a WECl Application

The province sent out a "Call for Applications" for the WECl Program on March 3 and the submission date for applications is March 31, 2026. Staff are recommending that an application be made to the WECl Fund to complete a Class EA study. The study would be funded 50% by the municipality and 50% by the MNR (if the application is successful) and must be completed within the fiscal year between April 1, 2026 and March 15, 2027.

Decisions on funding applications are normally finalized by the WECl Committee in May. Should the application be successful, staff would release a 'request for proposal' immediately following notification from MNR.

The WECl application process requires that the application submission include a Conservation Authority Board approval/resolution to provide confirmation of matched funding. As such, staff present the following recommendation for consideration of the Board.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority support an application to the WECl program for funding to complete a Class EA for the Garden Hill Dam to evaluate repair and decommissioning alternatives to determine a preferred option for the future of the Garden Hill Dam.

Prepared by:



Cory Harris, P.Eng.
Watershed Services Coordinator

Recommended by:



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

*MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE
RESOLUTION*

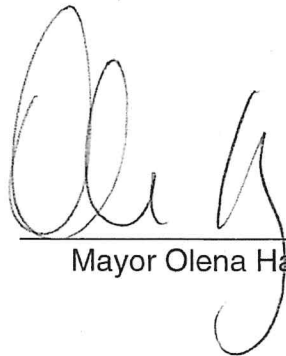
Date: 24 February 2026

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MOVED BY: Councillor Mink

SECONDED BY: Deputy Mayor Pearson

That Council approve Option 3 as noted in Report WE-02-26 and authorize funding in the amount of \$50,000 per year for two years (2026 and 2027), totaling \$100,000, to be funded from the Community Benefit Reserve Fund, to support a Class Environmental Assessment for the Garden Hill Dam to evaluate repair and decommissioning alternatives, subject to a successful application to the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) program.



Mayor Olena Hankivsky