

Memorandum

TO: Krista Power, Director – Legislative Services & City Clerk **FILE:**

FROM: Councillor Trevor Giertuga
Chair – Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee

DATE: 11/24/2025

SUBJECT: Advocacy – Proposed Regional Consolidation of Conservation Authorities

MEETING & DATE: City Council - 12/02/2025

At the November 19, 2025 meeting of the Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee (IGAC), the committee heard a deputation from Tammy Cook, Chief Administrative Officer – Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA), requesting endorsement of a resolution calling on the Province of Ontario to maintain local, municipally governed conservation authorities and to opposed consolidating LRCA into the proposed “Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration as outlined in Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Notice 025-1257.

Municipalities have historically established and governed conservation authorities under the *Conservation Authorities Act*. Municipalities within the Lakehead Region established the Neebing Valley Conservation Authority in 1954, which enlarged to become the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority in 1963. Local municipalities currently provide approximately 50% of total conservation authority funding, while the Province of Ontario provides approximately 5%.

For decades LRCA has tailored programs and services to local watershed needs, maintained accountable service standards, and ensured fair and predictable costs for ratepayers. LCRA owns and manages extensive lands, much of which was donated by residents with the expectation of long-term protection, and locally guided stewardship in the hands of the local conservation authority.

The Provincial Government proposes consolidating Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities into seven large regional bodies under a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, removing local governance and leaving municipal cost

distribution undefined. LRCA would become part of the Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority. Additional background information is included in Attachment A: Bill 68 and ERO Posting #025-1257: Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities.

It should be noted that the Province already has authority, under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, to establish legislation, regulations, and standards without restructuring governance, as proposed.

LRCA is seeking Council's support via a resolution urging the Province of Ontario to:

- Maintain local, independent, municipally governed, watershed-based conservation authorities to ensure strong local representation, appropriate levy decisions, community-focused services, and proper management of the area's conservation lands.
- Avoid imposing a centralized agency structure that could introduce additional costs, red tape, and bureaucracy, reducing efficiency and responsiveness to local needs.
- Collaborate with municipalities and conservation authorities to improve consistency, capacity, and program delivery across Ontario without compromising local accountability.
- Reject the proposed "Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority" boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257.
- Support creation of a "Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority" as the preferred model for the Lakehead Region.
- Require the Ministry to directly engage affected municipalities before finalizing consolidation boundaries or legislative amendments.
- And that Ministry engagement carefully consider ownership of reserve funds that have been collected over many years through municipal contributions.

IGAC supports LCRA's request for support, and as such, the following motion is provided for Council's consideration:

WITH RESPECT to the Memorandum from Councillor Trevor Giertuga, Chair – Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee, dated November 24, 2025, we recommend that City Council calls on the Government of Ontario to maintain local, independent, municipally governed, watershed-based conservation authorities to ensure strong local representation in decisions related to municipal levies, community-focused service delivery, and the protection and management of conservation lands;

AND THAT while City Council 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 THAT City Council 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 THAT City Council is opposed to the proposed “Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257;

AND THAT City Council recommends that the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority form the “Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority”;

AND THAT the Ministry engage directly with affected municipalities of the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, before finalizing any consolidation boundaries or legislative amendments;

AND THAT careful consideration be given to the financial ownership of reserve funds that have been collected by the LRCA over many years, through municipal funding;

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be forwarded to:

- The Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations prior to the deadline of December 22, 2025,
- The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Opposition critics,
- Local Members of Provincial Parliament,
- Local Members of Parliament,
- The Association of Municipalities of Ontario,
- Conservation Ontario,
- All local municipalities within the LRCA Area of Jurisdiction, and
- All Conservation Authorities in Ontario;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

Attachment A: Bill 68 and ERO Posting #025-1257: Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario’s conservation authorities