



Report of the Commissioner of Public Works

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Service Level Agreement for Expedited Review of Capital Projects

1. Recommendations

1. Council authorize both the Commissioner of Public Works and the General Manager of YTN Telecom Network Inc. to negotiate and execute service level agreement renewal for one year and future renewals with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority on business terms satisfactory to the Commissioner of Public Works and General Manager of YTN Telecom Network Inc. and legal terms satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor.
2. Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

2. Purpose

This report seeks Council authorization to renew the service level agreement (SLA) with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), commencing 2026. It also seeks Council authorization to allow the Commissioner of Public Works and the General Manager of YTN Telecom Network Inc. (YorkNet) to execute future renewals and extensions so long as capital infrastructure projects for growth and renewal are identified in the approved budget and continue to provide cost-effective regional benefits.

Key Points:

- Renewing the TRCA SLA will support expedited reviews and advancement of key capital projects
- Ontario's Bill 68 (Plan to Protect Ontario Act, 2025) proposes changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, including amalgamation of Conservation Authorities under

a new centralized Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, with implementation expected in late 2026

- Council authorization is requested for delegated authority to negotiate and renew the SLA for one year, with options to renew. The need for future renewals will be assessed through an annual review of project priorities and updated provincial service standards
- The Region will maintain flexibility by including options to exit the SLA if changing conditions no longer require or support expedited reviews

3. Background

Service Level Agreement expedites capital project planning reviews and permitting

Capital infrastructure projects must comply with the *Environmental Assessment Act* and obtain approvals from external regulatory agencies.

To support timely reviews, in 2004, Council approved additional funding and execution of an SLA with TRCA, providing the Region with priority access to technical expertise on environmental features and functions, as well as dedicated TRCA staff to support expedited reviews for permits under Ontario Regulation 166/06.

2015, Council authorized renewal of the SLA with a five-year extension exercised in 2020. The current SLA is set to expire on December 31, 2025.

SLA framework drives efficient project delivery and strategic collaboration

The SLA was originally established to allocate dedicated TRCA staff for the timely review of projects under the Region's master planning and environmental assessment processes, and to expedite reviews of required TRCA approvals in accordance with legislated responsibilities of conservation authorities.

The current SLA continues to be an effective tool for providing certainty on the timeline associated with receiving permits for infrastructure projects. TRCA has supported York Region by completing reviews of over 110 environmental assessment submissions, 300 permit approvals, and more than 1000 pre-consultations for Public Works and YorkNet infrastructure projects, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements from 2015 to 2024. TRCA has also provided expert input into the development and updates of the Region's Transportation and Water and Wastewater Master Plans, as well as numerous Municipal Class Environmental Assessments.

By establishing clear timelines and expectations for permit approvals, the SLA enables Regional departments to effectively schedule work, allocate resources, and meet stakeholder commitments. This proactive framework fosters collaboration, predictability, and efficiency across a range of infrastructure initiatives.

Periodic renewal of this SLA provides a formal mechanism to incorporate evolving federal and provincial policies, adapt to emerging best practices, and respond to changing needs. This ensures the SLA remains aligned with strategic priorities and continues to support effective infrastructure delivery.

Proposed provincial legislation to amalgamate conservation authorities

On November 6, 2025, the Ontario government introduced proposed *Conservation Authority Act* changes under Bill 68 *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025* including a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized oversight over the province's conservation authorities. This involves consolidating the current 36 conservation authorities into seven regional watershed-based conservation authorities, with an objective to modernize and streamline the conservation authority system to improve timelines for housing and infrastructure projects.

4. Analysis

Leveraging TRCA for timely and cost-effective expertise on capital projects

Conservation authorities employ highly specialized professionals with deep technical expertise and a unique understanding of local watersheds. Under the current agreement, York Region benefits from TRCA providing expedited review of project submissions and priority access to staff for pre-consultations. These experts provide historical knowledge and contextual insight that are invaluable support for Regional projects from the lens of the approval body.

SLA renewal to account for changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and regulations

Since the execution of the current SLA, amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and its regulations have reshaped the governance and legislated responsibilities of conservation authorities. Ontario Regulation 41/24 - Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits has narrowed the scope of conservation authorities' jurisdiction and introduced measures to streamline the permitting process. Ontario Regulation 596/22 has placed limitations on services related to natural heritage conformity and stormwater management.

The existing SLA, which expires at the end of 2025, was internally reviewed to ensure alignment with updated conservation authority regulations and service standards consistent with previous SLAs.

Maintaining service continuity while province develops regulations to support proposed changes under Bill 68

Bill 68 has not received royal assent at the time of this report and the province is consulting on elements of this proposal. The Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks has signaled that the anticipated reorganization of conservation authorities will occur after the next municipal election, in the fall of 2026. The Region is moving forward with a one-year renewal of this SLA as a bridging mechanism until new service standards are finalized and implemented. Once regulations are released and implications of these changes are known, the SLA can be reassessed. The Region will maintain flexibility by including options to exit the SLA if changing business conditions no longer require or support expedited reviews at a reasonable cost.

Agreement supports Regional Council's Vision for strong, caring, safe communities

The recommended renewal of the TRCA SLA will help ensure York Region continues to deliver safe water and high levels of customer satisfaction by supporting timely progress on key capital projects. It aligns with the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan priorities, including investing in a safe and effective transportation system, promoting environmentally sustainable services, preserving green space, and supporting safe and healthy communities. The renewed SLA also supports the bottom-line objectives outlined in the Transportation Master Plan, and the Water and Wastewater Master Plan.

5. Financial Considerations

Annual SLA costs and permit fee exemption supports Regional efficiency

This report does not present current or anticipated financial changes to the Region's budget or fiscal position.

The Region's early engagement through project design meetings with TRCA helps clarify submission requirements and improve alignment with TRCA standards. This proactive approach leads to better designs, faster approvals, and fewer delays caused by design changes and repeated submissions, helping ensure the Region can achieve its capital delivery goals and commitments. The SLA establishes a clear commitment to expedite reviews and significantly shorten timelines, typically by 50%, underscoring its vital role in advancing the Region's capital infrastructure program.

Between 2016 and 2024, annual fees paid by York Region to TRCA under the SLA ranged from \$801,000 to \$985,000 and were funded by the capital program included in the approved annual budget. Region-led projects are exempt from permit fees under the SLA, helping to partially offset the overall annual costs of the agreement.

The estimated cost for TRCA to meet their obligations under the renewed SLA is \$1.1M in 2026. Permit and approval costs are included in individual capital project budgets within the Public Works and YorkNet budgets, approved by Council annually.

6. Local Impact

All local municipalities within York Region benefit from timely delivery of Regional infrastructure within the TRCA watershed. A one year renewal of the SLA will reduce the risk of project delay related to permitting and compliance under Ontario Regulation 41/24.

7. Conclusion

Renewal of the SLA with TRCA will ensure continued priority service and dedicated conservation authority staff to provide timely technical review and clearance for Regional projects.

Providing the Commissioner of Public Works and the General Manager of YorkNet authority to negotiate future renewals of the SLA will provide additional flexibility and facilitate efficient updates in response to legislative changes.

For more information on this report, please contact Kelly Strueby, Director, Finance and Performance at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71611. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by:



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Commissioner of Public Works

Approved for Submission:



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November 17, 2025
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