



Office of the Commissioner
Environmental Services Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Environmental Services

Date: May 30, 2019

Re: York Region Response – Modernizing the Conservation Authorities Act and Development Permitting – Joint Submission: ERO 013-5018 & ERO 013 4992

On April 5, 2018, the Province released a discussion paper and two postings to modernize conservation authority operations and development permits on the Environmental Registry of Ontario for a 45 day comment period. Region staff submitted the attached response on May 18 to both postings to meet Ministry timelines.

Due to the short consultation timeframe, it was not possible to bring this response to York Region Council for endorsement prior to submission; however, should Council have any additional comments, staff will forward them to the Province.

Discussion paper proposes clearly defining mandate of conservation authorities and classifying other activities as discretionary services

As a part of the modernization process, the Province proposed to clearly define the core mandate of conservation authorities under the *Conservation Authorities Act* with a greater focus on natural hazard management. Region staff recommended that this mandate include responsibilities related to: watershed management and enforcement, stormwater management, source water protection, mapping and managing flood risks, natural hazard lands, shoreline management, wetlands, assessing/monitoring natural heritage features, and establishing climate change adaptation guidelines.

As identified in the proposal, municipalities could continue to fund conservation authorities to deliver programs that fall outside of the defined mandate by entering into agreements for these “discretionary” services. This shift is, in part, to make the process for funding conservation

authorities more transparent. Region staff recommended the Ministry establish flexible timelines for review or renegotiation of agreements and that an extended transition period be established.

Staff reiterated need for Province to meet their 50-50 funding commitment

Conservation authorities provide critical services that help reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, including mitigating impacts to critical infrastructure. These efforts benefit residents and businesses, and help ensure Ontario's economy can prosper.

The 2019 Provincial budget resulted in further provincial funding cuts for conservation authorities. Municipalities bear nearly the full cost of conservation authorities' activities, including programs related to flood protection. This represents an imbalanced downloading of Provincial responsibility onto municipalities.

Regional Council and staff have repeatedly called upon previous Provincial governments to meet their 50-50 funding commitment with municipalities. As part of this response, staff requested the Provincial government meet their 50-50 funding commitment for services falling under the core mandate of conservation authorities.

For further details regarding the Region's recommendations to the Province, please see attached "York Region Response – Modernizing the Conservation Authorities Act and Development Permitting – Joint Submission: ERO 013-5018 & ERO 013 4992".

Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Environmental Services

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments (1)
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