

Appendix B

Notice of decision details – Conservation authority consolidation

The [notice of decision](#) posted to the Environmental Registry of Ontario notes that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks plans to propose amendments to the [Conservation Authorities Act](#) that would:

- Consolidate 35 of the current conservation authorities into eight regional conservation authorities, by way of statutory amalgamation, to occur in early 2027, or a later date prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, including setting out the rules that would apply to the amalgamation of the conservation authorities, such as:
 - Ensuring all rights, obligations assets and liabilities from the conservation authorities would become those of the new regional conservation authorities.
 - Providing for the continuation of all existing agreements, contracts, permitting or other actions underway.
 - Ensuring the current jurisdiction of the individual conservation authorities are combined to become the jurisdiction of the consolidated regional conservation authority.
 - Specifying that the provisions of the *Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act* would apply to the consolidation of conservation authorities.
- Continue the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority with its current jurisdiction, renamed as the Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority.
- Require the Ontario Provincial Conservation Authority to:
 - Establish eight transition committees – one for each regional conservation authority being consolidated with members to include the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)/General Manager and a municipally-elected board member from each of the current conservation authorities and any other members as appointed by the Ontario Provincial Conservation Authority.
 - Appoint Project Executives who will chair the transition committees. The Project Executives appointed by the Ontario Provincial Conservation Authority would also serve as inaugural CAO of the regional conservation authority for up to 24 months upon consolidation to ensure stability and continuity in leadership. Following this time period, the members (i.e. board) of the regional conservation authority will assume responsibility for long-term CAO decisions.
- Mandate transition committees to develop a transition plan to prepare for the consolidation, subject to the Ontario Provincial Conservation Authority's review.

Project Executives will be able to request information from conservation authorities as needed to support the development of the transition plan.

- Require the members, sometimes referred to as the board of directors, of regional conservation authorities to be selected by the participating municipalities prior to the date of consolidation to ensure a seamless transition from the predecessor conservation authorities.
- Require new regional conservation authorities to implement the transition plan, with the opportunity to make revisions subject to approval by the Ontario Provincial Conservation Authority, and report on progress of the implementation of the plan to the Ontario Provincial Conservation Authority.
- Suspend existing provisions in the *Conservation Authorities Act* allowing for the establishment, enlargement, amalgamation, and dissolution of conservation authorities during the transition period.
- Enable the Minister to issue immediate temporary restrictions on certain activities by conservation authorities, to facilitate the planned consolidation. The intent is to restrict activities related to extraordinary financial, asset, or employment decisions to mitigate risk and ensure a stable transition to the new regional structure.
- Enable the Minister to issue directions regarding the budget and apportionment process for 2027 conservation authority budgets that occurs during 2026.
- Update the conservation authority governance structure for regional conservation authorities with participating municipalities being the upper-tier and single-tier municipalities within a conservation authority's area of jurisdiction.
- Set out that the method for determining the number of members (commonly referred to as "the board members") that each participating municipality appoints to the regional conservation authority would be prescribed in regulation based on each participating municipality's proportion of the population in the regional conservation authority's jurisdiction; each participating municipality would be guaranteed at least one member. The amendments, if passed, would also set out that regulations would establish the maximum number of members appointed by all participating municipalities of a conservation authority (maximum board size), and the maximum number of members that any one municipality could appoint, to ensure fairness and balance.
- Update other governance provisions including removing the requirement that 70 per cent of appointments of members to the conservation authority by a participating municipality be elected officials and that the positions of chair and vice chair be filled on a rotating basis between participating municipalities.
- Add that certain knowledge and experience must be considered by municipalities when appointing members to the conservation authority who do not sit on municipal council.

- Update that chairs and vice-chairs may be appointed for two-year terms and up to a maximum of eight total years served.
- Require each regional conservation authority to establish one or more watershed councils to ensure local priorities are identified and considered by the regional conservation authority and create regulation-making authority for the Minister to outline the number, composition, functions, powers, duties, activities and procedures of watershed councils.