

Resolution
Regular Council Meeting



Agenda Number: 9.4.
Resolution Number 23-371
Title: 23-R-49 Letter of Support - Conservation Officer Reclassification
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023

Seconded by: M. Lubbock

Moved by: S. Cote

WHEREAS Ontario has 196 field Conservation Officers including 6 canine handlers who provide protection to Municipalities Natural Resources and uphold public safety by enforcing hunting and firearm laws and investigate gruesome injuries and even deaths that result from hunting-related accidents; in addition, Conservation Officers are often First Responders and ensure public safety by facilitating evacuations and enforcing Emergency Area orders during forest fires during record breaking wildfires such as we witnessed this past summer; and

WHEREAS Conservation Officers perform comparable work to Police Officers and other Enforcement Officers within the province and are professional, armed Peace Officers trained to police standards and undergo the same training; and

WHEREAS Ontario Municipalities are required that their constituents are informed, and their interests are safeguarded and ensure they have access to outreach and natural resources compliance services; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Coleman does here by support the Ontario Conservation Officer's Association (OCA) in their efforts to have Conservation Officers in the Province of Ontario reclassified as Enforcement Officers and be compensated fairly; and

FURTHER request the support of all Ontario Municipalities; and

FURTHERMORE, THAT this resolution with a letter of support be forwarded to Ontario Premiere Doug Ford, the Minister of Natural Resources Graydon Smith, the Local Provincial Member of Parliament (MPP) John Vanthof, Temiskaming Municipal Association and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities.

CARRIED

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 0

S. Cote

M. Lubbock

P. Rieux

L. Perry

Certified True Copy

Christopher W. Oslund
CAO/Clerk - Treasurer

To: Mayor and Council **Report No:** _____

From: _____ **Department:** _____

Subject: Letter of Support – Conservation Officer Reclassification

Attachment(s): Letter of Support

Recommendation:

WHEREAS Ontario has 196 field Conservation Officers including 6 canine handlers who provide protection to Municipalities Natural Resources and uphold public safety by enforcing hunting and firearm laws and investigate gruesome injuries and even deaths that result from hunting-related accidents; in addition, Conservation Officers are often First Responders and ensure public safety by facilitating evacuations and enforcing Emergency Area orders during forest fires during record breaking wildfires such as we witnessed this past summer; and

WHEREAS Conservation Officers perform comparable work to Police Officers and other Enforcement Officers within the province and are professional, armed Peace Officers trained to police standards and undergo the same training; and

WHEREAS Ontario Municipalities are required that their constituents are informed, and their interests are safeguarded and ensure they have access to outreach and natural resources compliance services; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Corporation of the [Municipality] does here by support the Ontario Conservation Officer’s Association (OCA) in their efforts to have Conservation Officers in the Province of Ontario reclassified as Enforcement Officers and be compensated fairly; and

FURTHER request the support of all Ontario Municipalities; and

FURTHERMORE, THAT this resolution with a letter of support be forwarded to Ontario Premier Doug Ford, the Minister of Natural Resources Graydon Smith, the Local Provincial Member of Parliament (MPP) John Vanthof, Temiskaming Municipal Association and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities.

Background:

Ontario’s Conservation Officers protect our beloved natural resources and wildlife. They uphold public safety by enforcing hunting and firearm laws and they investigate gruesome injuries and even deaths that result from hunting-related accidents. It’s a highly skilled

and dangerous law enforcement job. This work can be emotional and traumatizing. This work is often solitary, with Officers working alone in remote areas during inclement weather.

But Conservation Officers aren't recognized, or compensated properly, for the work they do and risks they face. Morale is low, turnover is high and short staffing is putting public safety at risk.

As Municipalities we can support Ontario's Conservation Officers by sending our MPP, the Premier Doug Ford and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Graydon Smith a letter, to demand that Conservation Officer's are reclassified as Enforcement Officers and be compensated fairly.

Information:

Conservation Officers are a valuable part of our community. They protect our natural resources. They perform outreach and educate the public and they ensure public safety by conducting hunting safety, snowmobile, ATV, and vessel enforcement. They prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species in Ontario.

Public safety legislation includes rules relates to helmets, lifejackets, and other safety and navigational equipment, liquor consumption while operating a vehicle, and dam construction or alteration. This includes enforcing hunting rules related to hunting safety, forest fires, and oil, gas, and aggregates extraction.

Conservation Officers mission is to safeguard the public interest by leading and delivering outreach and natural resources compliance services. They enforce over 25 acts and regulations and work from 48 locations across the province to lead year-round field compliance checks to protect and regulate natural resources and keep the public safe.

Conservation Officers have been engaged in our community in various activities aimed at helping our citizens such as running food drives to help local food banks. They also attend outdoor shows and fishing derbies, local fish and game clubs, trapping councils and naturalists, school classrooms, youth clubs and family focused outdoor events.

In conclusion, they provide investigative and enforcement services related to the safe and sustainable use of natural resources for people to enjoy for generations to come!

Prepared By: _____

Date: _____

[The Municipality Address]

[Date]

Ministry office

Premier's Office

Room 281

Legislation Building, Queen's Park

Toronto, ON M7A 1A1.

Email: doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

**RE: Ontario Conservation Officer's Association (OCA) – Conservation Officer
Reclassification**

Dear Hon. Doug Ford

The [Municipality] is proud of our natural resources and spaces. We have the mission to protect our natural resources, we are required to safeguard the public interest by ensuring our constituents have access to outreach and natural resources compliance services.

Conservation Officers are a valuable part of our community. They are passionate about keeping Ontarians safe. They put their lives on the line to protect Ontario's natural resources and spaces. They uphold public safety by enforcing hunting and firearm laws and they investigate gruesome injuries and even deaths from tragic hunting-related accidents. It's a highly skilled and dangerous law enforcement job.

Conservation Officers are also our front-line defense in the prevention of the introduction and spread of invasive species in Ontario. There are approximately 1.076 million square km in Ontario. So, with less than 200 field Conservation Officers to cover it, that is an average of approximately 5,380 square km per each field Conservation Officer.

Conservation Officers perform comparable work to Police Officers and other Enforcement Officers within the province and are professional, armed Peace Officers trained to police standards and undergo the same training as the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

The Council of [Municipality] does hereby support the Ontario Conservation Officers Association (OCA) in their efforts to have Conservation Officers in the Province of Ontario reclassified as Enforcement Officers and be compensated fairly. It is important for us that our Natural Resources be enjoyable for generations to come.

Please find attached resolution [Number] affirming the support from the Council for the [Municipality].

Your truly,

Mayor/Reeve

[Municipality Name]

[Name of the Members]

c.c. Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
John Vanthof, Local Provincial Member of Parliament
Temiskaming Municipal Association
Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

Encl.