

December 16, 2025

VIA EMAIL

RE: Bill 68 and Proposed Consolidation of Conservation Authorities

At its meeting held December 10, 2025 Oxford County Council passed the following resolution:

Moved By: Brian Petrie
Seconded By: David Mayberry

Resolved that Correspondence Item 7.4 be received as information; and,

Whereas the Conservation Authorities Act (1946) enables municipalities to establish local conservation authorities, and when municipalities choose to form such authorities, they assume responsibility for governance and funding through the appointment of a Board of Directors and the provision of an annual levy to cover expenses; and,

Whereas the local municipalities of Oxford County established the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) with other consenting municipalities within the watershed. (initially formed in 1947) along with Grand River Conservation Authority (1948), Catfish Creek Conservation Authority (1950) and Long Point Conservation Authority (1948); and,

Whereas local municipalities currently provide approximately 35% of total conservation authority funding, while the Province of Ontario provides approximately 2% (2026 budget); and,

Whereas municipalities have governed and invested local rate payer funds in their respective conservation authorities for decades, tailoring programs and services to local watershed needs, maintaining accountable service standards, and ensuring fair and predictable costs for ratepayers; and,

Whereas conservation authorities collectively own and manage thousands of acres of land. Many of these properties were entrusted to the UTRCA for long-term protection, stewardship, and the public good, with the expectation that such lands would be cared for by locally governed conservation authorities; and,

Whereas Bill 68 (Schedule 3) proposes the creation of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, a Crown corporation that would assume governance responsibilities and consolidate Ontario's 36 conservation authorities into seven regional authorities, with municipal cost apportionment yet to be defined; and,

Whereas the Province already possesses the authority to establish overarching legislation, regulations, and standards through the Conservation Authorities Act and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Council of the County of Oxford 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 further that while the County of Oxford supports provincial goals towards consistent permit approval processes, shared services, and digital modernization, it does not support it through imposing a new top-down agency structure creating unnecessary cost, red tape, and bureaucracy, undermining efficiency and responsiveness to local community needs;

And further that the County of Oxford 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;

And further that the Province respect the roles that Municipalities and Conservation Authorities play in conservation and governance; And further that Oxford County advocate that it is not in favour of the proposed changes;

And further that a copy of this resolution be sent to:

- the Ontario Minister of Environment, Conservation, and Parks,
- local MPPs,
- Association of Municipalities of Ontario,
- Rural Ontario Municipal Association,
- area Indigenous communities,
- all Ontario municipalities,
- Conservation Authorities, and
- Conservation Ontario

DISPOSITION: Motion Carried

Should you require anything further or have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Mansbridge', written in a cursive style.

Lindsey A. Mansbridge
County Clerk