

Report to Council

Report Title:	Provincial Consolidation of Ontario Conservation Authorities		
Prepared By:	Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk		
Department:	Clerk's		
Date:	December 9, 2025		
Report Number:	CLK2025-18	File Number:	C11CL
Attachments:	SVCA Materials for Municipal Consideration Regarding the ERO Posting on Regional Conservation Authority Consolidation SVCA Environmental Registry Posting on Conservation Authorities		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report CLK2025-18 - Provincial Consolidation of Ontario Conservation Authorities, prepared by Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk and in doing so provides direction on submitting comments to the Environmental Registry of Ontario on behalf of the Municipality of Brockton based on the recommendations outlined by the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority:

Report:

Background:

On October 31, 2025 the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks announced the Provincial Government's intention to introduce legislation to amend the Conservation Authorities Act to create an Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, a Provincial Board-Governed Agency that would provide centralized leadership, efficient governance, strategic direction, and oversight of Ontario's conservation authorities. The Province also proposes to consolidate 36 Conservation Authorities into 7 Regional Conservation Authorities (RCA's), aligning with watershed boundaries. The new RCA's would remain independent organizations operating with municipal governance and oversight, in accordance with requirements under the Conservation Authorities Act.

The Province has stated that their proposed changes would "reduce duplicative administrative costs, free-up resources for frontline conservation, and better align conservation authorities' services with provincial priorities on housing, the economy, infrastructure and climate resilience.", and that "regional conservation authorities would operate with greater consistency and transparency, deliver faster services to municipalities and permit applicants, while ensuring decisions continue to be based on sound science."

The RCA's are proposed to continue fulfilling Provincially mandated programs such as the Drinking Water Source Protection under the Clean Water Act, regulating, development and other activities in areas at risk of natural hazards like flooding and erosion, flood forecasting and warning, and managing their lands and recreational trails. RCA's would also continue to provide municipal and other watershed programs and services set out under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, such as tree planting, data collection, restoration and other integrated watershed management activities that enhance the resilience of local watersheds and educate and engage local communities.

The criteria used to determine the boundaries for the Regional Conservation Authorities according to the material circulated by the Province was:

- maintaining watershed-based jurisdictions – aligning with natural hydrological boundaries to support effective flood and water management, consistent with drinking water Source Protection Areas and Regions
- relationships between conservation authorities and municipalities – reducing administrative duplication and overlap for municipalities and conservation authorities to simplify accountability and strengthen local partnerships
- balancing expertise and capacity across conservation authorities – enhancing technical skills and resources across conservation authorities to improve service and program delivery
- service continuity – ensuring uninterrupted delivery of local conservation authority programs – including flood forecasting and warning, permitting, and source water protection – through and after consolidation

Instead of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority, the Municipality of Brockton would be included in the new **Huron Superior Regional Conservation Authority**, which stretches from Lake Huron to Lake Simcoe, representing a total of **78 Municipalities** into **one RCA** (merging Saugeen Valley, Ausable Bayfield, Maitland Valley, Grey Sauble, Nottawasaga Valley, Lake Simcoe Region, and Thunder Bay Conservation Authorities).

Analysis:

The Province is currently accepting feedback on the proposed boundaries and criteria for the regional consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities through the [Environmental Registry of Ontario](#) (ERO) until December 22, 2025.

The ERO consultation provides the opportunity to ensure the Province understands the importance of local watershed expertise, and the realities of service delivery in rural Ontario.

For now, SVCA's day-to-day operations continue as usual, with existing programs, services and governing structures in place. The Conservation Authorities Act and regulations continue to define how Conservation Authorities (CAs) operate and are funded.

On November 10, 2025 the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) provided correspondence on the ERO posting on CAs, providing background on the consultation process, and summarizing the content of the ERO Notice. SVCA noted that they would review all materials, coordinate with Conservation Ontario and neighbouring Conservation Authorities and prepare a response to the ERO posting prior to the consultation deadline.

On November 25, 2025 the SVCA provided a follow-up of materials for Municipal member consideration regarding the ERO posting. The materials provided are to aid Municipalities in their submission to the ERO posting, including key considerations related to rural capacity, public safety and hazard management, governance and representation, financial stewardship, and the essential role of local partnerships. SVCA's points reflect both operational realities within our watershed and broader implications for municipal service delivery. SVCA's intent is to offer practical information that may assist in shaping Municipalities' comments to the Province.

SVCA's Key Consideration Recommendations:

1. Rural Realities and Capacity

SVCA Recommendation: Support rural CAs with targeted capacity-building measures, such as shared technical resources and funding for digital infrastructure, rather than restructuring that could reduce essential local jobs and positions that local community expects to be locally available and relied upon.

2. Public Safety, Hazard Management, and Technical Responsibility

SVCA Recommendation: Maintain local technical roles while supplementing them with regional expertise for complex cases. This hybrid approach ensures timely decisions, preserves public trust, and strengthens resilience during major flood events.

3. Local Governance, Decision Making, and Representation

SVCA Recommendation: Retain local governance structures while introducing provincial service standards and performance benchmarks. This approach combines consistency with responsiveness and sustains municipal engagement.

4. Economic Fairness, Local Investment, and Asset Stewardship

SVCA Recommendation: Ensure any modernization plan respects local financial commitments and preserves control over reserves and infrastructure. Consider targeted provincial funding to offset transition costs and support workforce stability.

5. Community Partnerships, Identity, and Public Trust

SVCA Recommendation: Protect local identity and engagement by maintaining visible, locally rooted service delivery. Encourage regional collaboration without eroding the trust and participation that are the foundation of successful conservation programs.

SVCA suggests that Ontario can meet its goals for improved permitting and housing development by reinforcing, rather than replacing, the proven foundation of local Conservation Authorities. A collaborative model that respects rural realities, responds to urban needs, protects Ontario's long-standing public safety strengths, and builds on existing governance will create greater consistency without compromising effectiveness, local identity, or community trust. This approach strengthens the system while supporting faster, more reliable approvals.

SVCA will provide official feedback to the Province through coordination with the SVCA General Manager and Conservation Ontario. SVCA continues to work with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders to ensure their perspectives and local input are represented.

Also important to note is the impact that this RCA consolidation will have on our Municipality's representation. Currently, Brockton can have one representative on the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority Board (noting that once Brockton's population officially reached 10,000, two representatives would be permitted). With the new Huron Superior Regional Conservation Authority (HSRCA) representing 78 Municipalities, the Municipality of Brockton, along with other Bruce County Municipalities, risks losing all representation and advocacy for our local rural needs since the HSRCA covers such a vast area, including larger cities such as Barrie, Newmarket, Aurora, Richmond Hill and Thunder Bay in the HSRCA.

Staff recommend submitting comments to the Environmental Registry of Ontario with consideration of those outlined by the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority. Council can also provide direction on any additional comments they wish to submit to the ERO posting.

Strategic Action Plan Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Strategic Action Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment | Yes |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development | N/A |
| • Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance | Yes |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonya Watson", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer