



NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes
December 5, 2025, 10:00a.m.
Carolinian Hall
3350 Merrittville Hwy., Thorold ON

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Metcalfe, Chair
S. Beattie, Vice Chair
B. Clark
D. Cridland
R. Foster
B. Grant
P. O'Neill
M. Seaborn
M. Tadeson
A. Witteveen

STAFF PRESENT: L. Lee-Yates, CAO/Secretary-Treasurer
W. Catterick, GIS Technician
A. Christie, Director, Conservation Areas
M. Davis, Manager, Office of the CAO & Board
D. Deluce, Director, Planning & Development
M. Ferrusi, Manager, People & Performance
L. Gagnon, Director, Corporate Services
N. Green, Director, Watershed Strategies & Climate Change
E. Navarro, Supervisor, Communications & PR

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Resolution No. FA-129-2025

Moved by: Stew Beattie

Seconded by: Michelle Seaborn

THAT the agenda for the Full Authority Special Meeting held on December 5, 2025 **BE APPROVED.**

CARRIED

2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1. Report No. FA-59-25 RE: Draft Comments pertaining to ERO #025-1247 regarding proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities

CAO Lee-Yates provided an overview of feedback gathered to support the development of draft comments and key areas of focus developed for the Board's consideration. Discussion ensued regarding next steps to promote awareness, ownership of assets, and financial support for OPCA and regional CAs. Further discussion regarding the efficiency and resiliency of NPCA operations with large jurisdiction and shoreline, and small staff complement and operating budget took place.

Resolution No. FA-130-2025

Moved by: Brad Clark

Seconded by: Michelle Seaborn

THAT Report No. FA-59-25 RE: Draft Comments pertaining to ERO #025-1257 Regarding Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities **BE RECEIVED;**

AND THAT the draft submission for Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) Comments on ERO #025-1257, as appended, **BE APPROVED;**

AND THAT a copy of the final submission for NPCA Comments on ERO #025-1257 be forwarded to Niagara Region, the lower-tier municipalities within Niagara Region, City of Hamilton, Haldimand County, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations on the Grand River, Niagara Peninsula Source Protection Committee, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), local area MPPs, Conservation Ontario and all Conservation Authorities in Ontario.

CARRIED

4. MOTIONS

4.1. NPCA Position on the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities

Resolution No. FA-131-2025

Moved by: Stew Beattie

Seconded by: Brian Grant

WHEREAS the municipalities of the Niagara Peninsula watershed agreed to form the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority in 1959 under the *Conservation Authorities Act* to protect people, property, farmland and natural resources through watershed-based decision making informed by local science and knowledge, and municipal representation;

AND WHEREAS the Provincial Government has amended the *Conservation Authorities Act* through Bill 68 "Plan to Protect Ontario (Budget Measures)" that allows for establishing the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to oversee the transition to Regional Conservation Authorities, and direct the strategic

direction, finances, and operational activities of the new Regional Conservation Authorities, imposing additional costs on municipalities to fund the Agency via fees levied on the new Regional Conservation Authority;

AND WHEREAS the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has posted Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 (“Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario’s Conservation Authorities”), proposing to reduce Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities to 7 regional entities as part of a broader restructuring;

AND WHEREAS under this proposal, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority would be consolidated into a new “Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” together with the Hamilton Conservation Authority, Halton Region Conservation Authority and Credit Valley Conservation, forming a single organization extending along the western Lake Ontario shoreline from Niagara through Halton and Peel, encompassing urban and rural watershed that support the Greater Toronto-Hamilton corridor;

AND WHEREAS the proposed “Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” is to span approximately 4,900 square kilometres and serve 28 municipalities comprised of nearly 2 million people, thereby risking local representation and the delivery of locally-focused programs and services;

AND WHEREAS the participating municipalities lying within NPCA’s jurisdiction fund approximately 52% of the annual operating budget of NPCA through municipal levies, compared to the annual provincial transfer payment of approximately 0.5%;

AND WHEREAS in September 2018, the Auditor General of Ontario published their report on the Special Audit of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, with 20 recommendations to the conservation authority and 4 recommendations to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to improve governance, operations, policies and processes to strengthen the delivery of programs and services, which have been fully implemented by Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, who is committed to continuous improvement;

AND WHEREAS watershed municipalities benefit from having conservation authority staff available locally that know our watersheds, municipal staff, communities, Indigenous community representatives, developers, consultants, and environmental non-government agencies;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved:

THAT the NPCA Board of Directors (“the Board”) does not support the proposed “Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257 as the proposal lacks sufficient justification, would significantly diminish local governance, and fails to recognize the effectiveness and efficiencies already achieved within existing watershed-based models; and

AND THAT the Board affirms that large-scale regional consolidation is unnecessary, would introduce substantial transition costs, and would divert resources away from frontline watershed programs.

AND THAT the Board further asserts that restructuring at this scale would erode local decision-making, weaken municipal accountability, and disrupt long-standing community partnerships that are central to delivering responsive watershed management;

AND THAT the Board urges the Province to strengthen centralized standards, resources, and communication rather than undertaking broad structural amalgamation and to provide sustainable, predictable provincial funding across conservation authorities—particularly where gaps exist—to enable local conservation authorities to advance ongoing digitization and systemization work that has already resulted in improved efficiency and consistency in recent years;

AND THAT the Board requests that the Ministry engage meaningfully and collaboratively with affected municipalities, conservation authorities, and local First Nations before advancing any consolidation, to ensure that any changes reflect both local needs and the practical realities of implementation;

AND THAT the Board believes that the Province’s proposed new online permitting portal can be implemented within the existing conservation authority framework without requiring structural amalgamation;

AND THAT this resolution be included as part of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation submission to the Environmental Registry of Ontario and forwarded to Niagara Region, the lower-tier municipalities within Niagara Region, City of Hamilton, Haldimand County, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, Niagara Peninsula Source Protection Committee, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), local area MPPs, Conservation Ontario, and all Conservation Authorities in Ontario.

CARRIED

Discussion ensued regarding land ownership and potential options for their protection amidst uncertainty of new governance structures, lineage of landholdings, and land inventories recently completed as required under the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

Resolution No. FA-132-2025

Moved by: Robert Foster

Seconded by: Stew Beattie

THAT staff be directed to seek legal opinion pertaining to NPCA’s land holdings and potential implications for NPCA’s assets related to the proposed regional consolidation of conservation authorities

AND THAT legal opinion be brought forward to the Full Authority Meeting scheduled December 19, 2025 for the Board’s consideration.

CARRIED

5. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Metcalfe adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.