



Background Briefing

GRCA governance and finances

December 2014

Origins of the GRCA

The Grand River Conservation Authority is the oldest watershed management agency in Canada and one of the oldest in the world.

It is a corporate body through which municipalities work cooperatively to manage the water and natural resources of the watershed for the benefit of all.

In the early part of the 20th century, public concern over flooding, water supply and water quality led the provincial government to pass the Grand River Conservation Commission Act in 1932. The Act allowed municipalities to join together to create a commission to address the issues. The first meeting was held May 30, 1934.

The GRCC built and managed Shand, Luther and Conestogo dams. It also carried out reforestation and other conservation programs.

Because of the success of the GRCC, the province used it as a model for the creation of conservation authorities in other parts of the province. The Conservation Authorities Act was passed in 1946.

In 1948 the Grand Valley Conservation Authority (GVCA) was created to carry out recreational and conservation programs that were beyond the mandate of the commission. It created a string of conservation areas throughout the watershed and managed other conservation programs.

To streamline watershed management operations, the GRCC and GVCA merged in 1966 to create the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Legislation and regulations

The operation of the GRCA is governed by provincial legislation, regulations, policies and procedures. The GRCA also has its own internal bylaws, policies and procedures.

- The Conservation Authorities Act 1990 establishes the powers of jurisdiction of conservation authorities.
- Ontario Regulation 106 sets out rules for manage-

ment of the GRCA's conservation areas.

- Ontario Regulation 150/06 establishes the GRCA's authority to regulate construction and other activities in floodplains, wetlands, shorelines and other natural areas.
- Ontario Regulation 670/00 outlines the procedure for establishing conservation authority levies.
- GRCA Bylaw 1-2014 outlines the structure of the board and its committees, meeting procedures, rules for electing officers and related matters.

The GRCA board

The operation of the GRCA is overseen by a 26-member board of directors. The board takes an active role in guiding the activities of the GRCA by approving policies, programs and budget.

All of the members are appointed by the participating municipalities in the watershed. Smaller municipalities may share one representative while larger municipalities may have one representative or more.



Shand Dam was the first project of the Conservation Commission.

Most board members are also municipal councillors, although some municipalities appoint citizens to the GRCA board. They are generally appointed soon after municipal elections.

In January of each year, the board elects two officers to one-year terms: a chair and a vice-chair.

Management of the GRCA is overseen by a Chief Administrative Officer and a senior management team.

Finances

The GRCA budget is approved at the Annual General Meeting in February. Several draft versions of the budget

are presented to the board for consideration in the months leading up to the final vote. The GRCA for budget for 2014 is \$29.8 million.

Expenditures:

- **Base operating and capital budget:** \$19.3 million (65 per cent) for ongoing programs such as flood prevention, environmental education, planning, forest management and other activities.
- **Special projects:** \$2.7 million (9 per cent). One-time projects or continuing programs, paid by outside sources, such as the Rural Water Quality Program and subwatershed studies.
- **Conservation area operations and capital:** \$7 million (23 per cent) for 11 conservation areas that offer camping, swimming, fishing, hiking and other activities.
- **Source Water Protection:** \$800,000 (3 per cent) to implement the drinking water source protection pro-

gram under the Clean Water Act. The Ontario government pays all of the costs of this project.

Revenues:

- **Municipal levy:** \$10.3 million (34 per cent) from watershed municipalities.
- **Government grants:** \$3.6 million (12 per cent) from the provincial and federal governments in annual grants or special grants for programs such as source water protection and stimulus projects.
- **Self-generated revenues:** \$13.9 million (47 per cent) from campground fees, nature centre fees, planning fees, tree sales, hydroelectricity generation, rental property income and other sources.
- **Funding from reserves:** \$2 million (7 per cent). This represents money set aside in earlier years for work on special projects that run across several years, capital investments and other expenditures.

Municipal representation

One representative

- Town of Grand Valley, Townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, Grand Valley, Melancthon (Dufferin County) and Southgate (Grey County)
- Townships of Wellington North and Mapleton (Wellington County)
- Township of Centre Wellington (Wellington County)
- Town of Erin, Townships of Guelph/Eramosa and Puslinch (Wellington County)
- Town of North Perth and Township of Perth East (Perth County)
- Regional Municipality of Halton
- City of Hamilton
- County of Oxford

Two representatives

- City of Guelph
- City of Brantford
- County of Brant
- Counties of Norfolk and Haldimand

Ten representatives

- Regional Municipality of Waterloo

