

Grand River Conservation Authority

Report number: SGM-11-25-101

Date: November 5, 2025

To: Members of the Grand River Conservation Authority

Subject: Ontario Creating New Conservation Authority Agency to Improve Service Delivery and Protect Communities

Provincial Announcement

On Friday, October 31, 2025, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) announced the Province will soon introduce legislation through amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act (CAA) to create a new agency called the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA). This new agency is intended to provide centralized leadership, efficient governance, strategic direction and oversight of all Conservation Authorities (CAs).

According to the [Province's news release](#), the OPCA will be tasked with leading key modernization projects, including:

- developing a single digital permitting platform to provide a faster, more predictable approvals process and improved customer service
- streamlining and standardizing service delivery by setting clear, provincewide performance standards and support their consistent application by conservation authorities with centralized data and updated floodplain mapping
- overseeing the implementation of a regional, watershed-based consolidation of conservation authorities
- The legislative changes to the CAA are expected to include significant updates to the administration and governance of CAs.

The new structure is expected to roll out between late 2026 and into 2027.

Consultation

In the coming weeks, the Province is anticipated to begin consultations with the public, municipalities, stakeholders, Indigenous communities and other partners on a watershed-based consolidation of conservation authorities.

The policy proposal will be posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) for 45 days, inviting review and comments on the criteria applied to determine the proposed regional boundaries and the proposed geographical jurisdiction of each region based on the following:

- maintaining watershed-based jurisdictions for effective flood and water management
- reducing administrative overlap and duplication for municipalities and CAs
- balancing expertise and capacity across CAs to improve service and program delivery
- ensuring uninterrupted delivery of local CA programs

This will provide the GRCA with an opportunity to review the proposal, share our expertise, and contribute our perspective.

Next Steps

- The GRCA will hold a special virtual meeting of the General Membership on Wednesday, November 5, at 9:30 a.m. to discuss the Province's announcement and the

establishment of a Conservation Authorities Act Regulations Ad-hoc Committee. The purpose of the Committee will be to help provide input and direction on new/amendments to legislation, regulations and other provincial directives.

- The GRCA is committed to working with the Government of Ontario to modernize and streamline services and appreciates the opportunity to be engaged during the provincial consultation. We will provide feedback in consultation with local municipalities on the Government's proposed framework.

The Province has recognized the critical role CAs play in protecting people from floods and natural hazards, managing watersheds, and providing public access to natural spaces. These responsibilities remain at the core of the GRCA's mission. We are committed to being part of the solution that balances effective and efficient watershed management with Ontario's housing goals and continuing to serve the Grand River watershed and its residents.

The GRCA remains committed to delivering the mandatory programs and services as well as those programs and services under agreements with our member municipalities and other partners.

Member municipalities will be updated on this process as details become available.

Submitted by:

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