



Agenda: Board of Directors Meeting

January 12, 2026

1:00 p.m.

Hybrid meeting via Zoom and MVCA Office Boardroom

ROLL CALL

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (WRITTEN)

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MAIN BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes: Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, December 8, 2025, Page 2
2. Staff Presentation: Modernizing Financial Oversight, Elizabeth Clifffen-Gallant
3. GM Update, Report 3533/26, Sally McIntyre, Page 12
4. Fall River Flood and Erosion Hazard Mapping Study, Report 3534/26, Juraj Cunderlik, Page 46
5. 2026 Planning & Regulation Fees, Report 3535/26, Stacy Millard and Ben Dopson, Page 52
6. 2026-2028 Education Plan, Report 3536/26, Emma Higgins, Page 63
7. By-law Amendment: Abstentions, Report 3537/26, Sally McIntyre, Page 94

IN CAMERA

8. Labour Relations, Verbal report, Roy Huetl

ADJOURNMENT



Minutes: Board of Directors Meeting

December 8, 2025

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom and MVCA Office Boardroom

ROLL CALL

Members Present

- Roy Huetl, Chair
- Paul Kehoe, Vice Chair (11:45 a.m.)
- Bev Holmes
- Cindy Kelsey
- Clarke Kelly (Virtual)
- Dena Comley
- Glen Gower (Virtual)
- Helen Yanch
- Janet Mason
- Jeannie Kelso
- Jeff Atkinson
- Mary Lou Souter
- Richard Kidd
- Wayne Baker

Staff

- Sally McIntyre, General Manager
- Stacy Millard, Treasurer
- Juraj Cunderlik, Director of Engineering
- Scott Lawryk, Property Manager
- Alex Broadbent, Manager of I&CT
- Kelly Hollington, Recording Secretary

Guests

- Donna Rotar, Baker Tilly

Members Absent

- Allan Hubley
- Cathy Curry
- Taylor Popkie

Chair called the meeting to order at 10:04 p.m.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any conflicts of interest and informed that they may declare a conflict at any time during the session. No declarations were received.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no amendments or discussion regarding the agenda.

BOD25/12/08 – 1

MOVED BY: M. Souter

SECONDED BY: D. Comley

Resolved, that the agenda for the December 8., 2025, Board of Directors Meeting be adopted as presented.

“CARRIED”

MAIN BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes: Board of Directors Meeting, October 20, 2025

There were no amendments or discussion regarding the minutes.

BOD25/12/08 – 2

MOVED BY: J. Kelso

SECONDED BY: W. Baker

Resolved, that the minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting held on October 20, 2025, be received and approved as printed.

“CARRIED”

2. Receipt of Draft Minutes: Finance and Administration Advisory Committee, November 27, 2025.

There was no discussion regarding the draft minutes.

3. GM Update, Report 3529/25, Sally McIntyre.

S. McIntyre provided the GM Update, she highlighted:

- Mill of Kintail Museum Update – A virtual public information session held on November 24th was attended by over 30 people. Staff received an expression of interest from North Lanark Historical Society regarding the potential relocation of their museum to the Mill of Kintail and co-management of the Mill of Kintail museum and collection. Organizations have confirmed their participation in the working group and a kickoff meeting is scheduled for January.

- K&P Trail Sale/Lease – MVCA is executing the agreements later today for the purchase and sale and the interim lease of the K&P Trail.
- MVCA's Director of Engineering, Juraj Cunderlik and summer student Violet French took 2nd prize at the annual Latornell conference for their poster presentation regarding the impacts of climate change on the magnitude of flood events in the Carp River.

J. Mason asked for a copy of the poster from the Latornell conference. S. McIntyre agreed.

4. Bill 68 and Conservation Authority Amalgamation, Report 3530/25, Sally McIntyre.

S. McIntyre reported that she attended a consultation session on Friday, December 5 hosted by the Province. She summarized the provincial proposal for the St. Lawrence Regional CA and noted that MVCA is the only CA in the region with significant infrastructure used to manage water levels and flows across an entire watershed. She also noted that Hassaan Basit, Chief Conservation Executive stated on December 5th that he is not interested in alternative boundaries that would split an existing CAs between two Regional CAs. She summarized the proposed boundary criteria and identified the following gaps: financial fairness, operational effectiveness, governance effectiveness, existing partnership agreements and regulatory differences.

S. McIntyre provided a brief overview of how conservation authorities were formed and highlighted that municipal levies constituted ~68% of MVCA's 2025 operating revenues. She reviewed the approved legislative changes regarding the proposed Ontario CA Agency and expressed concerns regarding its power to levy CAs to support Agency operations.

S. McIntyre reviewed several areas of risk, focusing on governance and funding including uncertainty regarding who will be responsible for the costs to amalgamate. She highlighted potential risks of moving to a province-wide permitting digital solution without phased implementation.

M. Souter asked what the motive is behind the provincial guidelines. S. McIntyre explained that the province wants a single window approach for developers, and potentially to allow for screening and for tracking key performance indicators. She noted that MVCA relies heavily on the pre-consultation process to engage with the public on the specifics of regulations for their property and questioned whether that might be diminished or lost.

J. Kelso asked when a permit timeline starts, at the point of application or other time. S. McIntyre explained that once a permit application is submitted, MVCA staff determine if all the requirements are met and the timeline starts once the package is deemed to be complete.

R. Kidd commented that the Provincial government is not afraid of change and developing new provincial policy statements to suit its needs.

S. McIntyre reviewed each of the key points from the draft response to ERO 025-1257 and asked for input from the Board.

R. Kidd asked if it's worth including the recommendation for the Lower Ottawa River Conservation Authority if Hassaan Basit has indicated that it is not in his interest to reallocate boundaries. S. McIntyre explained that the area recommended for reallocation is small—an area largely south of Highway 401.

B. Holmes asked if South Nation CA (SNCA) agrees with the provincial proposal. S. McIntyre explained that SNCA has rejected the provincial proposal in totality and objects to any amalgamation. She highlighted the SNCA is a bilingual CA, and they have concerns regarding continued service delivery in French if amalgamation occurs. She noted there would be costs associated with making the proposed Regional CA bilingual. S. McIntyre explained that the General Manager of Raisin Region CA was amenable to the recommendation of a Lower Ottawa River CA (LORCA).

S. McIntyre asked for feedback from C. Kelly and G. Gower regarding the City of Ottawa's intended approach.

G. Gower commented that City of Ottawa staff are preparing a response to the ERO. He explained that the Ottawa Councillors who sit on the Ottawa-area CA Boards are working on a motion to bring to council on Wednesday December 10. He noted that the motion opposes the amalgamation and raises issues around protecting municipal taxpayers, the reserves in place within the CAs, governance and boundaries. The motion will recommend the LORCA as an alternative to the St. Lawrence Regional CA.

S. McIntyre commented that it's worth recommending the LORCA in the submission as the province is looking for alternatives to its proposal. M. Souter agreed.

S. McIntyre reviewed the suggested municipal representation if the province moves forward with the LORCA model.

H. Yanch noted that the model does not include representation from Addington Highlands. S. McIntyre explained that the municipalities were determined based upon approximate assessment value percentages. She noted that North Frontenac is not on the Board for Quinte CA due to its size. She clarified that the values are an estimate and sought input from Board members.

J. Kelso asked that it be clarified in the submission that the municipal representation model is an estimate.

J. Mason asked if there is a way to include representation across the entire watershed. She highlighted that the upper Mississippi River is not fully represented. S. McIntyre agreed that representation from Lanark County would have to cover both the Rideau River watershed and the Mississippi river watershed.

R. Kidd commented that Lanark County would appoint its own representatives. J. Mason responded that the counties could be given guidelines to include all geographic areas.

M. Souter highlighted that the upper Mississippi River watershed contains important water control structures. S. McIntyre recommended adding two “Headwaters” representatives. J. Mason expressed her support for adding these positions. J. Atkinson expressed his support and noted that adding headwater representation supports the notion of a watershed-based regional CA.

S. McIntyre recommended that the positions be rotating seats amongst the headwater municipalities. H. Yanch expressed her support for the recommendation of two additional rotating seats.

C. Kelly asked how the rotating positions would be selected. S. McIntyre responded that the positions could be selected per term of council, or every two years. R. Kidd commented that the Heath Unit had rotating seats that were for 2-year terms.

H. Yanch expressed concerns regarding having to train new Board members every two years. S. McIntyre clarified that the rotation of positions would only be for the two headwater positions.

S. McIntyre highlighted the recommendation of a phased implementation approach to moving forward with amalgamation.

J. Mason suggested that MVCA recommend that amalgamations start in the Toronto area as it is an area of concern for the province. S. McIntyre noted that Hassaan Basit is

concerned about the smaller CAs that are unable to consistently deliver baseline levels of service. J. Mason recommended tailoring the recommendation to an area that appeals to Hassaan Basit, such as Nottawasaga CA.

J. Atkinson recommended highlighting the issues associated with changing to a bilingual organization in the proposed St. Lawrence Regional CA including cost and staff retention.

G. Gower expressed his support in the recommendations and thanked S. McIntyre and R. Huetl for their work dealing with the unexpected announcements, keeping the Board updated on information and developing a response.

S. McIntyre asked G. Gower and C. Kelly about bilingual service delivery. C. Kelly confirmed that everything at the City is offered in both official languages.

R. Kidd asked if there is a way to do comparative analysis of the assessment value per capita amongst the 5 CAs. He highlighted the importance of including capital assets such as MVCA's dams. S. McIntyre committed to sending the numbers for the CAs in the proposed St. Lawrence Region CA. He asked that the value of provincial grants per CA per capita also be included. S. McIntyre agreed.

R. Kidd suggested that the proposed regional CA could share the capital costs across all municipalities within the region. J. Mason noted that it would open the door for other capital project costs to be shared across all municipalities in the regional CA. J. Mason highlighted that the recommendations put forward support keeping municipal dollars within each municipality. S. McIntyre explained that the operating and capital budgets for each CA are unique.

BOD25/12/08 – 3

MOVED BY: D. Comley

SECONDED BY: M. Souter

Resolved, That the Board of Directors direct staff to submit the comments contained in Attachment 2 regarding the proposed amalgamation of Conservation Authorities per ERO posting 025-1257, as amended.

“CARRIED”

5. Draft 2026 Budget, Report 3527/25, Sally McIntyre & Stacy Millard.

S. McIntyre reviewed the 2026 budget direction per the October 20, 2025 Board of Directors meeting and the total budget percentage change between the 2025 budget and draft 2026 budget. She noted that differences are largely attributable to actual timesheet submissions in 2025 and consequent increase in staff time allocated to Category 1 services and reduction in time allocated to Category 3 services. She reviewed changes in staff compensation based on Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) and merit increases. She reviewed the Category 1 operating budget and noted that MVCA will establish a cost centre for amalgamation costs (including legal and advisory services), to allow for their tracking and recovery from the province.

S. Millard highlighted a reassignment of Floodplain and Hazard Mapping project costs from the operating budget to the capital budget. She noted that data collected are asset used across several applications at MVCA.

J. Mason asked if the data is considered a depreciating asset. D. Rotar confirmed that the flood and erosion hazard mapping data is considered a depreciating asset. She noted that costs are incurred over the useful lifetime of the asset.

J. Kelso asked how the lifetime of an asset is determined. D. Rotar explained that she relies on the expertise of staff. She noted MOUs with the City of Ottawa speak to 10-year benchmarks. D. Rotar highlighted that the lifetime is an estimate.

S. McIntyre asked J. Cunderlik what the recommended benchmark is for updating floodplain and hazard mapping. J. Cunderlik confirmed that a 10-year benchmark is generally recommended. He explained that the lifetime of mapping data is subject to factors such as the amount of development that occurs in the area.

S. McIntyre reviewed the Category 1 Capital budget and planned capital projects for 2026. In follow-up to a query made at the Finance & Administration Advisory Committee meeting, she noted that MVCA is not well positioned to undertake additional dam safety reviews in 2026 because the preparatory work has not been completed. There may be potential to undertake an additional condition assessment at Big Gull Lake dam. She highlighted that the additional project would require additional staff resources and explained that the 2026 work plan uses all staff resources with little leeway for additional projects. J. Cunderlik explained that the dam safety review projects are data intensive and can necessitate years of preparatory work.

S. McIntyre provided an overview of the municipal levy and the percentage of change from 2025 to 2026. She reviewed the draft 2026 operating budget, operating revenues and the percentage of change from 2025 to 2026, and projected year-end reserve balance for 2026.

R. Kidd asked if all CAs have a watershed management category within their operating budget. S. McIntyre explained that all CAs would have a watershed management or similar category. She noted that the amounts would be different across the CAs.

BOD25/12/08 – 4

MOVED BY: J. Mason

SECONDED BY: B. Holmes

Resolved, That the Board of Directors approve the Draft Budget (as amended by the Finance and Administration Advisory Committee) for circulation to member municipalities for comment.

“CARRIED”

6. Duty Officer Compensation, Report 3528/25, Sally McIntyre & Juraj Cunderlik.

S. McIntyre reviewed the recommended change in service delivery from seasonal monitoring to 365 day/year system monitoring. She provided the proposed compensation structure for duty officers. She noted that amendments recommended by the Finance and Administration Advisory Committee have been included in the current draft.

BOD25/12/08 – 5

MOVED BY: J. Kelso

SECONDED BY: W. Baker

Resolved, That the Board of Directors approve the update of the MVCA Employee Manual to include the duty officer compensation table and related amendments recommended in Report 3528/25 as amended per direction of the Finance and Administration Advisory Committee.

“CARRIED”

7. Financial Update – YTD September 30, 2025, Report 3526/25, Stacy Millard.

S. Millard noted that finances are on track. Expenses are down ~\$83,000. She highlighted that the water and sewer connection has been delayed again and is projected to cost more due to the delay. She noted that the 10-year capital plan will be tabled with the Board in March or April 2026, leaving room for adjustments. She explained that investment earnings were ~\$53,000 over approximately 4 months.

8. In Camera – New Agency – Amalgamation, Verbal Report, Sally McIntyre & Roy Huetl.

Presentations and discussions for items 8 and 9 were held in camera, see resolution below.

9. In Camera – Labour Relations, Verbal Report, Roy Huetl.

BOD25/12/08 – 6

MOVED BY: D. Comley

SECONDED BY: C. Kelsey

a) Resolved, That the Board of Directors move to in-camera discussions regarding labour relations or employee negotiations.

And further resolved that Sally McIntyre remain in the room and MVCA staff leave the room for initial discussions.

And further resolved that Sally McIntyre leave the room upon request for further discussion.

b) Resolved that the Board of Directors move to in-camera discussions regarding personal matters about an identifiable individual, including employees of the Authority.

And further resolved that the Sally McIntyre and MVCA Staff leave the room.

“CARRIED”

BOD25/12/08 – 7

MOVED BY: P. Kehoe

SECONDED BY: W. Baker

Resolved, That the Board of Directors move out of in-camera discussions.

“CARRIED”

CONSENT ITEMS

10. 2026 Mileage, Per Diem & Honorarium Rates, Report 3531/25, Sally McIntyre.

BOD25/12/08 – 8

Resolved, that the Board of Directors approve a 2% increase to Board member per diems, the honorariums paid to the Chair and Vice Chair, and the mileage rates paid to employees and Board members, to take effect January 1, 2026.

“CARRIED THROUGH CONSENT AGENDA”

11. 2026 MVCA Board Meeting Schedule, Report 3532/25, Sally McIntyre.

BOD25/12/08 – 9

Resolved, that the Board of Directors approve the proposed 2026 meeting schedule.

“CARRIED THROUGH CONSENT AGENDA”

ADJOURNMENT

BOD25/12/8 – 10

MOVED BY: P. Kehoe

SECONDED BY: H. Yanch

Resolved, That the Board of Directors meeting be adjourned.

“CARRIED”

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

K. Hollington, Recording Secretary



GM Update

TO: The Chair and Members of the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Sally McIntyre, General Manager

REPORT: 3533/26, January 7, 2026

FOR INFORMATION

INTERNAL

1. K&P Trail Sale/Lease

The sale and lease agreements were signed by Chair Roy Huetl, County council Wardens, CAOs and myself at a ceremony held at Lanark County offices on December 8, 2025.

There are a variety of title matters to be addressed and the agreements provide for phased transfer as they are resolved. Most title issues are because ownership and survey records were not updated when Ontario moved from the land registry to the land titles system. Trail segments free of any title problems can be transferred once the counties have had the opportunity to inspect them. In the meantime, Lanark and Renfrew counties will be able to operate and make leasehold improvements to the trail in accordance with the terms of the lease agreement.



Image 1: Roy Huetl, Bill Saunders, Richard Kidd, and Peter Emon

2. K&P Adjacent Landowner Update

A case conference was held December 2, 2025, to review ongoing matters and establish dates for the official hearing required to enforce the 2017 Minutes of Settlement.

MVCA received a survey report from the adjacent landowners that we will review with our consultant surveyor in preparation for a case conference scheduled for February 19, 2026. This is to be followed by the official court hearing on April 9 and 10, 2026.

3. Designated Substances Study

Building inspections and material sampling occurred in the fall with results delivered just before the holidays. All buildings were found to be free of asbestos containing material (ACMs). The possible presence of limited quantities of acrylonitrile, arsenic, benzene, ethylene oxide, isocyanates, and silica do not pose a concern, provided precautionary measures are followed during any future renovation or demolition activities.

4. Museum Hours 2026

Following consultation with the Museum Advisory Committee and further to the Board's direction to work towards full cost recovery for Category 3 services, the museum will move from being open 7 days to 5 days per week in 2026. The museum will be open Thursdays through Mondays to allow for activities on long-weekends and be closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This change will allow MVCA to move from 1 full-time and 2 part-time staff to 2 full-time staff.

EXTERNAL

5. Proposed Amalgamation of Conservation Authorities

No new information has been received from the province, however, MVCA was copied on several motions/submissions to the province. The following three key submissions are provided for your information:

- Joint submission by AMO and Conservation Ontario.
- Submission by consortium of over 70 largely retired individuals from the environmental sector including MVCA's original Resource Manager Alex Ansell.
- Motion approved by City of Ottawa council.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Letter from North Lanark Historical Society.
2. Conservation Ontario submission to the province regarding ERO 025-1060.
3. City of Ottawa motion re: Proposed Consolidation of CAs.

Sent by email to: minister.mecp@ontario.ca

December 24, 2025

The Honourable Todd McCarthy
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Subject: Recommendations for Successful Conservation Authority Transformation

Dear Minister McCarthy,

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Conservation Ontario are writing to provide joint feedback on ERO 025-1257 – Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario’s Conservation Authorities (CAs) complementing our respective and separate ERO submissions.

We support the goals of this proposal. Accelerating local approvals helps protect Ontario’s economy amid global uncertainty. Faster, more predictable approvals, that maintain environmental protections and prioritize frontline conservation can unlock the new infrastructure and development required for a growing, competitive province.

Municipal and local partnership is key to CA success. The success of the CA model is local: expertise, governance, community trust, and partnerships. If regionalization results in structures that cover too large a geographic area, we risk losing what makes CAs effective:

- **Loss of local expertise:** Watershed-based CAs have extensive on-the-ground expertise and understanding of unique environmental conditions, enabling timely and effective decision-making on local development, and real-time responsiveness during storms and emergencies.
- **Loss of effective municipal oversight:** Municipal accountability and oversight help CAs effectively balance watershed management and community growth.
- **Loss of strong local relationships:** Key stakeholders (such as municipalities, Indigenous communities, businesses, the agricultural community, watershed residents, and other partners) provide funding, donations, and build public trust.

Over 100 municipalities have passed or are considering resolutions urging the Province to move forward by working together with municipalities and CAs to achieve provincial objectives while preserving local governance, accountability, and expertise.

AMO and CO propose a right-sized, simplified regional model that:

- is grounded in science-based watershed boundaries
- maintains strong municipal involvement and oversight
- preserves local relationships and community trust
- balances the need to stay connected at the community level with the needs of certainty, predictability, and consistency of service delivery standards for permitting and approvals
- avoids unnecessary complexity by allowing lands, major agreements (including employment), reserve funds etc. to remain within existing corporations

To achieve this, AMO and CO recommend that the Province:

1. Work together with an implementation working group (including AMO, Conservation Ontario and select CAs, municipal, developers, and Indigenous representatives) to jointly develop practical solutions, including:
 - service standards, permitting faster and standardized approvals
 - governance and boundary design
 - funding models, allocations, and reserve structures
 - shared “back office” efficiencies and,
 - clear transition planning including: service continuity; points of contact; permitting continuity measures; board and staff communications; and staff retention measures.
2. Commit to a clear implementation timeline and transition plan supported by the implementation working group to position transformation for success. This will ensure continuity of service certainty for all stakeholders.
3. Share comprehensive financial, operational, and governance impact analysis to support evidence-based decision-making.
4. Restore a 50-50 municipal-provincial funding partnership for CAs, reflecting expanded Provincial role in CA operations while ensuring affordability and long-term stability.

All stakeholders, including the development industry, benefit from certainty. This approach minimizes the risk of multiple significant changes occurring at the same time, limits disruption to program delivery, and creates conditions for better outcomes and buy-in.

Ministry McCarthy, we thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and look forward to discussing these concerns with you. Please contact Karen Nesbitt, Director of Policy and Government Relations at AMO (knesbitt@amo.on.ca), to arrange a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Robin Jones
AMO President
Mayor of the Village of Westport



Dave Barton
Chair, Conservation Ontario
Vice-Chair, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Mayor, Township of Uxbridge

cc: The Honourable Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Sarah Harrison, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Martha Greenberg, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Rob Flack
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
Frost Building South
7th Floor, 7 Queen's Park Cres.
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

The Honourable Andrea Khanjin
Minister of Red Tape Reduction
7th Floor, 56 Wellesley St. W
Toronto, ON M5S 2S3

The Honourable Todd J. McCarthy
Minister of the Environment, Conservation
and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

The Honourable Jill Dunlop
Minister of Emergency Preparedness and
Response
7th Floor, Suite 702, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M5G 2C2

The Honourable Mike Harris
Minister of Natural Resources
Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St. W
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

The Honourable Lisa M. Thompson
Minister of Rural Affairs
28th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J4

December 22, 2025

Dear Premier Ford and Ministers,

We, the 74 undersigned individuals, have dedicated decades of service to local science-based and integrated water resource management through our efforts with Conservation Authorities (CAs) across Ontario. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the proposed consolidation of Conservation Authorities outlined in [ERO #025-1257](#) and further detailed in [Schedule 3 of Bill 68](#), and urge you to proceed with care and caution.

The proposed restructuring appears to lack an evidence-based approach and business case. Its development was without input from those most affected by the changes – the CAs and their member municipalities. To succeed, we believe a transformative initiative of this scale requires the effective and meaningful engagement of all partners throughout the process.

Although this proposal originated within the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the proposed consolidation of Ontario's 36 CAs into 7 regional CAs, as proposed, raises substantial questions that relate to the mandates and the responsibilities of several other

Ontario government ministries. These include Municipal Affairs and Housing, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Natural Resources, Rural Affairs, and Finance.

We remind provincial decision makers that watershed management in Ontario was initiated to address major water challenges like flooding, drought, erosion, and poor water quality. Under the leadership of Premier George Drew, during and immediately after WWII, Ontario's Progressive Conservatives introduced the *Conservation Authorities Act* in 1946. This was a visionary and nonpartisan act as part of the nation-building efforts following WWII. Modelled after the Tennessee Valley Authority and Ohio Conservancy Districts, the act enabled municipalities to voluntarily form watershed partnerships for managing land and water.

The Act was based on three key principles:

1. **Watershed Based Management:** Resource management is most effective when organized by watershed units.
2. **Local Initiative:** Communities within a river basin could form CAs
3. **Provincial-Municipal Partnership:** Municipalities forming CAs could receive provincial funding and technical support.

From 1946 to 1979, 36 conservation authorities were established by municipalities, in large part due to the strong support among subsequent Ontario Progressive Conservative Premiers, including Leslie Frost (1949-61), John Robarts (1961-71) and William Davis (1971-85).

Municipalities contribute financially and make decisions through appointed representatives to the Board. The Board identifies local resource management needs, endorses programs specifically designed to meet these needs, and, through partnerships with all levels of government and others, delivers on-the-ground projects. This governance approach has shown strong results. CAs carry out watershed management initiatives valued at more than \$300 million each year, meeting the priorities of local municipalities and the Ontarians they serve.

Together, CAs continue to:

- Significantly reduce flooding, drought, and erosion through structural and non-structural approaches, including dams and berms, wetland protection and enhancement, land acquisition, reforestation, and regulatory and planning tools. CAs operate and maintain 900 dams, dykes, channels and other erosion control structures along rivers and shorelines valued at \$3.8 billion in 2019 dollars. Water and erosion control infrastructure managed and maintained by CAs helps to avoid more than \$150 million annually (2022 dollars) in damages to properties.¹
- Improve water quality in Ontario's rivers by operating multi-purpose dams to maintain steady water flow in the summer and help increase Ontario's climate resilience by offering nature-based solutions to rehabilitate degraded landscapes and wetlands.

¹ 2022. [Conservation Ontario, 2022 Provincial Budget Consultation](#).

- Manage and own 150,000 hectares of natural areas, including forests, wetlands, areas of natural and scientific interest, recreational lands, natural heritage and cultural sites, and land for flood and erosion control within each of their watersheds. Among these lands are approximately 500 Conservation Areas, with more than 300 publicly accessible. These public treasures make up approximately 80,000 hectares. These lands protect important natural features, provide recreational opportunities for people to enjoy, such as hiking, canoeing, camping, snowshoeing and many other outdoor activities, as well as living classrooms for schools, nature groups, and others to explore and learn about nature. Over six million Ontarians visit these areas each year,² contributing to the local economy and tourism.
- Develop a governance framework that allows each authority to design customised decision-making approaches, balancing urban and rural voices while implementing specific initiatives that address their unique watersheds and concerns. This governance model has been internationally recognized, with the Grand River and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authorities both winning the Thiess International River Prize for exemplary river management.³

On June 27, 2025, we welcomed the appointment of the province's Chief Conservation Executive. This appointment appears to signal a renewed provincial commitment to Conservation Authorities (CAs) and offers an opportunity to strengthen collaborative and professional relationships between the province, CAs, and member municipalities. Such a partnership recognises the vital role that CAs play in supporting the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Then, on November 6, 2025, further changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, leading to the creation of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA), as part of Bill 68, the [Plan to Protect Ontario Act \(Budget Measures\) 2025](#), were made. Through these amendments, the OPCA has the potential to advance the core objectives of the *Conservation Authorities Act* by assuming responsibilities previously managed by the first-ever Conservation Branch, established in 1944. This includes providing policy and technical direction to Conservation Authorities (CAs), thereby promoting greater consistency in addressing resource-related issues across the province – a need that has remained unmet for several decades. Some of the undersigned have served in the Conservation Authorities Branch,⁴ and would welcome the opportunity to share relevant historical context and experience with staff at the new agency.

However, we believe that the consolidation plan presents significant risks to the continuity and effectiveness of watershed management practices that have been carefully developed and refined over the past eighty years. We are deeply concerned that the loss of local expertise and

² Conservation Ontario. [Conservation Authorities are Ontario's Second Largest Landowners](#).

³ International River Foundation. Thiess International River Prize. [2000 Grand River Conservation Authority](#) and [2009 Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority](#).

⁴ The Conservation Branch evolved into the Conservation Authorities Branch in 1962 and remained so until 1980.

the reduction of community representation in decision-making processes will undermine Ontario's ability to respond effectively to environmental challenges. Furthermore, the proposed restructuring may adversely impact collaborative relationships with municipalities, Indigenous communities, and local stakeholders, who have played an essential role in shaping sustainable water resource strategies throughout the province.

We seek clarification on the issues the Government of Ontario intends to address through the proposed consolidation of CAs. Should the focus be on the housing crisis, it is essential to acknowledge that this issue arises from a range of complex factors, with CAs being an inconsequential barrier to the issue. In fact, of the fifty-five recommendations cited in the [Report of the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force \(2022\)](#), for improving access to housing in Ontario, CAs are not mentioned as an impediment. Rather, CAs overall have repeatedly shown themselves to be excellent and responsive problem solvers throughout their history.

It is our view that merging CAs will divert senior leadership at these organizations and their member municipalities, requiring significant attention to administrative and logistical matters related to establishing regional entities. This process could hinder the ability of CAs to fulfill essential mandated programs, including flood protection for communities and capacity for local hazard management.

We offer the following 16 recommendations in the spirit of collaboration and enhancement of client service, watershed management, and natural hazard management in Ontario.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Government of Ontario implement the following:

- 1. Renew a Collaborative and Collegial Governance Relationship with Municipalities and Conservation Authorities.** The creation of the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) provides a unique opportunity to rekindle the relationship with CAs and municipalities. The goal of this renewed relationship is to ensure that future decisions honour the legacy established by Premiers George Drew, Leslie Frost, John Robarts and William Davis. These decision makers demonstrated foresight in enabling the formation of CAs through strong municipal-provincial partnerships to address natural resource challenges affecting economic growth and development by promoting restorative conservation initiatives for the people of Ontario.

Resource issues resulting from changing landscapes and climate will continue to emerge. The key to successfully managing outcomes depends on ongoing collaboration among the Ontario government, municipalities, and conservation authorities.

We understand that the OPAC shall consist of at least five and not more than 12 members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, who shall form the independent Board of Directors for the Agency. This independent Board will oversee the activities of the OPC. Consequently, it will be important that this Board work

collaboratively with CAs and the Board Members to ensure decisions impacting CAs are based on knowledge of programs and services such that they remain effective and efficient.

2. **Reduce Regulatory Fragmentation.** Both provincial and federal governments have created overlapping, sometimes conflicting legislation, each with its own administrative process. This complexity increases costs and inefficiency and doesn't always achieve the intended results. CAs, as service providers, often sit at the intersection between the public and government and may be mistakenly viewed as part of the problem.
3. **Support Efficient Planning and Permitting by Updating Provincial Technical Guidelines and Shared Service Tools.** Update provincial technical guidelines and shared service tools to foster consistency among CAs, rather than initiating structural amalgamation. The province already has the authority and tools to work directly with CAs. Any effort to regionalize permitting must not create delays or reduced access to technical expertise.
4. **Pause the Approval of the Proposed Regional Consolidation.** The OPCA, in conjunction with municipalities, CAs, and Conservation Ontario, should fully evaluate whether modernization goals could be achieved through enhanced provincial coordination, standardized approaches, and digital integration delivered through the new OPCA, without substantive restructuring of the existing CAs.
5. **Explore Alternative, Right-sized Regional Models.** Work with municipalities, CAs and Conservation Ontario, and other interested parties, through a meaningful and effective engagement process to consider smaller, more focused regional models that improve efficiency while preserving local knowledge and relationships, and effective and fair municipal representation. These discussions should also include voluntary regional collaboration units to ensure policy, practice, fees, and expertise/staffing are shared where needed. Voluntary regional CA collaborations already exist; however, no provincial resources are allocated to facilitate this collaboration.
6. **Conduct a Cost-Benefit Analysis and a Business Case/Feasibility Study.** A cost-benefit analysis and business case/feasibility study should be completed before any amalgamations are proposed. If this was done, it has not been made public. Nor has the province provided any details on how the CA funding model would work with the proposed amalgamation. This review will need to show the optimal size and boundaries of any new regional CAs to maximize cost savings and other potential benefits while minimizing impacts. These studies will also need to examine the relationship with other provincial agencies that have mandated responsibilities for resource management to avoid further fragmentation, inconsistencies, and double standards in program delivery.

It is recommended that if warranted, one region be consolidated first, where the identified need is greatest and interest is high, to ensure implementation is successful.

7. **Preserve Local Municipal Governance and Decision Making.** A single board representing 30 – 80 municipalities will dilute local voices. Any governance model must ensure meaningful local representation that balances rural and urban priorities and interests, so that watershed priorities are focused on priority resource issues and community needs. Further, the scope and meaningfulness of CA Boards should not be diminished by the provincial oversight and authority of the OPCA.
8. **Protect and Empower Local Conservation Efforts.** Centralized decisions may not address local challenges and may inadvertently weaken well-functioning systems through administrative complexity and diluted oversight. It is important to safeguard locally developed services, since adopting a regional model could decrease service quality, cause a loss of specialized knowledge, or limit community access for residents. Local staff best understand their watershed's conditions and needs, making them vital for public safety, environmental protection, and effective community services. Local CA staffing and watershed-specific expertise should be preserved, while maintaining the service improvements achieved since the negotiation of the Memoranda of Understanding between CAs and their member municipalities in 2024.
9. **Adhere to the Principles of Integrated Watershed Management.** Since every watershed differs in hydrology, geology, topography, and land use, each faces distinct challenges. Decisions regarding watershed management should be informed by science, geography, and local hydrological conditions, rather than by broad regional or administrative boundaries. Expansion of boundaries will complicate planning, permitting, emergency management, and municipal collaboration.
10. **Protect and Enhance Local Hazard Management Capacity and Continuity of Infrastructure Operations.** The protection of property and management of natural hazards are intrinsic to many of the multi-disciplinary plans and policies of municipalities across Ontario. CAs operate and maintain 900 dams, dykes, channels, and other erosion control structures along rivers and shorelines valued at \$3.8 billion in 2019 dollars. Water and erosion control infrastructure managed and maintained by CAs helps to avoid more than \$150 million annually in damages to properties.⁵ Many of these structures are coming to the end of their design life and will require significant investment to ensure that the infrastructure continues to provide the protections now and into the future, with considerations for climate change.

The management of this infrastructure requires local expertise and knowledge, and 24/7 operational readiness. Further, operation of these structures is supported by municipal levies.

⁵ 2022. [Conservation Ontario. 2022 Provincial Budget Consultation.](#)

CAs' regulation of natural hazardous areas is essential for emergency preparedness and prevention, reducing risk to life and property, protecting flood and erosion control infrastructure, and increasing resiliency to climate change.

11. Enhanced Provincial Investment required to Support Critical Water and Erosion

Control Infrastructure. In 2020/21, the province approved \$10 million in Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECl) funding for 68 projects across 21 conservation authorities. Investments in this critical infrastructure recognized the benefit to local communities across the province and ultimately, Ontario's economic recovery.⁶ Despite the program being oversubscribed by almost two-fold in 2020/2021, with an estimated total project cost of more than \$19 million for 102 project submissions from 30 CAs across the province in 2020/2021, the funding levels were subsequently returned to \$5M.

Continued and adequate investment in both current and future infrastructure is essential for the effective management of flooding and erosion moving forward. Further, this funding will need to recognize the disparate resources across the province and provide flexibility to meet the state-of-good-repair requirements for this essential infrastructure.

12. Preserve Locally Acquired Assets – CAs are responsible for owning or managing

150,000 hectares of natural areas, including forests, wetlands, areas of natural and scientific interest, recreational lands, natural heritage and cultural sites, and land for flood and erosion control within each of their watersheds. In some cases, thousands of hectares have also been donated to CAs with the expectation of local stewardship. Regionalization risks breaking that trust. Further, agreements will need to be updated or renegotiated with a new entity. Decisions regarding these lands and resources should remain with the local communities who use and maintain them.

This point also applies to the Foundations and Boards of Directors that have been established to secure donations and private endowments for parks, trails, and other stewardship initiatives. The proposed CA amalgamations could easily stifle CAs' ability to raise funds for local initiatives.

Many CAs also have reserve funds that have accumulated over decades through contributions by local municipalities and their taxpayers. It would be inequitable and unfair for these reserves to be distributed using a regional amalgamation model. Financial reserves created over decades through contributions by municipalities to their respective CAs must be retained.

⁶ [Letter from Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Committee on the Need for Reallocation of In-Year Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure \(WECl\) Funds to Kathy Woeller, Director, Integration Branch, Regional Operations Division, MNRF, dated April 23, 2020.](#)

13. Reinvest Provincial Funding in Conservation Authorities. The CA model has achieved tremendous successes across Ontario. However, we acknowledge that CAs' ability to deliver relevant programs to address resource challenges may vary in scope and intensity from one watershed to another, influenced by elements such as climate, landscape features, geology, water movement, and patterns of water consumption. Furthermore, the local population, level of municipal support, variability and inequity of the property tax base, provincial funding, and the CA's ability to generate income from fees, land rental, and other sources will also affect the level of programs and services they can deliver.

By restoring and modernizing the annual provincial transfers to CAs that were halved in 2019 and have remained unchanged since that time, the OPCA could improve the capacity of all CAs to provide comparable services and ensure that flood and watershed management tools and infrastructure are repaired, restored, and modernized to meet the challenges of the future.

14. Preserve Source Water Protection Areas and Regions. Following the Walkerton inquiry, Justice O'Connor made 121 recommendations on a wide range of areas related to protecting drinking water. These recommendations are the building blocks of Ontario's drinking water protection framework. Justice O'Connor's first recommendation was that drinking water should be protected by developing watershed-based source protection plans. The proposed consolidation splits and/or merges several existing source protection areas. Any proposed amalgamations of CAs must respect this fundamental premise of watershed-based source protection efforts and the governance model for source protection areas.

15. Fully Fund Transition Costs by the Province. The consolidation of 36 CAs to 7 regional CAs will result in substantial unfunded costs, including IT integration, HR restructuring, renaming/rebranding, land title work, asset transfers, and legal harmonization. We anticipate that substantial costs will be incurred, and vital conservation initiatives will likely be postponed or discontinued due to a shift in focus. Care must be taken to ensure that this does not happen. Municipalities should not be responsible for the impact or costs of any provincial restructuring efforts.

16. Fully Fund the Provincial Conservation Agency by the Province. Bill 68 empowers the OPCA to recover its operational and staffing costs to implement its mandate as described in the legislation. Although not specifically stated, we are concerned that the recovery of these costs and expenses will be borne by CAs through member municipalities and levies. This will further exacerbate the current disparities and the inequities of the existing CA funding model based on property taxes. This will create an excessive financial strain for municipalities and will run counter to the principle of

municipal-provincial partnerships for conservation. Municipalities should not carry the burden of this new agency.

The rationale and concerns that underpin these recommendations are further outlined in the attached Appendix 1.

We highly encourage the Government of Ontario to pause making rapid, drastic, costly, and irreparable changes to the structure of CAs. Rather, we ask that provincial decision makers carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal with input from CAs, municipalities, and other stakeholders. For effective hazard management and conservation improvements in Ontario, major changes must have the backing of those responsible for carrying them out. The safety and well-being of Ontarians must come first.

Yours in conservation,

Barbara Anderson Retired Operations and Policy Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC)	Bryan Howard Former Conservation Authorities Resources Manager General Manager (GM)	Paul Lehman Retired GM Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (CA)
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Barbara Veale Retired Acting CAO and Senior Director Watershed Management and Climate Change Conservation Halton	Mike Walters Retired CAO Lake Simcoe Region CA	

James Anderson Retired Conservationist Former GM Conservation Ontario	Alex S. Ansell Former Resources Manager Central Lake Ontario, Ganaraska, Rideau, and Mississippi CAs Former Member of South Lake Simcoe CA representing the Town of Aurora Former Chair Smiths Falls Planning Board Former Vice Chair Rideau Regional Planning Board Former Member of Aurora Planning Committee	Vicki Barron Retired GM Credit Valley Conservation
Joan Bell Retired 32 Years with Grand River and Hamilton CAs Community Relations Education, Marketing, Fundraising	Ala Boyd Retired Former A/Director Natural Resources Conservation Policy Branch Manager of Source Water Protection at MNR	Donna Cansfield Retired MPP Etobicoke Centre Former Minister of Energy, Minister of Transportation, and Minister of Natural Resources
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R. John Cottrill Retired CAO Grey Sauble CA	David Crombie Former Chair Greenbelt Council Former MP and Minister of National Health and Welfare Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Secretary of State for Canada Former Mayor City of Toronto	James B. Currier Former GM Raisin Region CA Former Assistant Regional Conservation Authorities Program Supervisor Eastern Region MNR

Brian Denney Retired CEO Toronto and Region CA (after 44 years of service)	Rob Fox, P.Eng. Retired Flood Forecasting and Warning and Dam Safety MNR	E. Adele Freeman Retired Director Watershed Management Toronto and Region CA
Michael Garrett Retired Former Assistant Deputy Minister of Administration Former Executive Coordinator, Lands & Waters Former Director, Conservation Authorities & Water Management Branch MNR	Mike Gurski Retired Director Bell Canada Privacy and Security Centre of Excellence Former Senior Policy Advisor: MNR, MGCS, MBS, MCSS, Youth Secretariat, MCS, OIPC	Donald Haley P.Eng. Retired Former Technical Specialist and Flood Control Engineer Toronto and Region CA
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Rae Horst Retired CAO Credit Valley CA Former Environmental Representative on the Ontario's 10-year Review of the Growth Plan for the GTA Former Director of Policy for the MNR for Aggregates, Petroleum, Crown Land and Water, Native Land Claims and Conservation Authorities	Steve Hounsell Past Chair Ontario Biodiversity Council Past President Forests Canada Past President Ontario Nature Retired Senior Environmental Advisor Ontario Power Generation	Richard D Hunter Retired Former CAO Otonabee Conservation Former GM Conservation Ontario Former Regional Director Southern Region & Northeast Region MNR Former Manager Conservation Authorities Section Conservation Authorities & Water Management Branch MNR
Jack G. Imhof Retired Aquatic Ecologist Watershed Scientist MNR	John Karau Former Chair Mississippi Valley CA Former Director Sustainable Water Management Branch Environment Canada Former Director Biodiversity Convention Office Environment Canada	Jim Kelleher Retired GM Lower Trent Conservation
Terry Kennedy Retired, Principal Toronto District School Board Past President Kennebec Lake Association Interim Chair, Quinte SPC	Peter Krause Past Chair Grand River CA and Conservation Ontario	Tom Kurtz Member of the South Georgian Bay SPC Retired Director of Shoreline Management with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust Former Assistant Director Conservation Authorities Branch

Dale Leadbeater Retired Principal Consultant and Biologist SLR Consulting Ltd Former Senior Ecologist Central Lake Ontario CA	Pieter Leenhouts, P.Eng. Past Chair Rideau Valley CA	Jim Manicom Retired CAO Grey Sauble CA
Craig Mather Retired CAO Toronto and Region CA	Stan Mathewson Former Resource Manager North Bay-Mattawa CA Former Provincial Watershed Planning Coordinator Conservation Authorities and Water Management Branch MNR	Andrew McBride Former Resources Manager Maitland Valley CA and Saugeen Valley CA
Andy McClellan 25 Years of Supporting Conservation Authorities (1964-1990)	Jack McFadden Former Director Aviation and Forest Fire Management Branch Former Regional Conservation Authority Program Coordinator	Susan E McGregor-Hunter Retired Former Executive Director Peterborough Green Up Former Community Relations Coordinator Credit Valley CA Former Community Relations Coordinator Ausable Bayfield CA
Sonya Meek Retired Senior Manager Sustainable Neighbourhoods Former Manager Watershed Planning Toronto and Region CA	Lorrie Minshall Retired Watershed Resources Planning Manager Grand River CA Retired Watershed Services Manager Long Point Region CA	Kathleen Morgan Retired Policy Advisor Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister MNR
Jamie Morris Chair Bird Friendly Kawartha Lakes Member Kawartha Lakes Environmental Advisory Committee	Bill Mungall Chair Advocacy, Issues and Policy Committee of Hike Ontario Former Resource Manager Ausable Bayfield CA	Gary Murphy Retired Director of Planning and Development Credit Valley Conservation

Jim Oliver Retired GM Long Point Region CA Retired Councillor Norfolk Count	Don Pearson Retired General Manager Lower Thames Valley CA Former GM Conservation Ontario Former GM Upper Thames River CA Former CAO, County of Perth	Richard Pilon Retired General Manager Raisin Region CA
Melvyn E. Plewes Retired Science Manager Ontario Ministry of the Environment	Kees Pols Retired General Manager of the Mattagami Region CA	Dave Pridham Retired Manager of Technical Services Kawartha Conservation
Mike Puddister Retired Deputy CAO Director of Watershed Transformation Credit Valley Conservation	Anne Robinson Former Councillor Township of Rideau Former Member and Vice- Chair (City of Ottawa representative) Rideau Valley CA Former Member Secretary and President Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association	Elizabeth Rogacki Chair of the Adjala-Toronto Township Committee of Adjustment Retired Formerly Senior Policy Advisor to the Management Board of Cabinet Former Coordinator of Strategic Management at MNR
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Walter H. Watt, BSc, MSc Retired Environmental Analyst, Property Administrator, Federally Regulated Pipeline Companies Former Citizen Member Don Watershed Task Force Former Instructor Applied Ecology Fleming College Former President Ontario Chapter Canadian Land Reclamation Assoc.	Karen R. Wianecki, M.PI. Director of Practice Planning Solutions Inc.	Mike Wong Former Chair North America Region of the IUCN World Commission of Protected Areas

c.c. Hassaan Basit, Chief Conservation Officer
Marit Stiles, Leader of the Official Opposition, Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario
John Fraser, Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario
Mike Schreiner, Leader, Green Party of Ontario
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Rural Ontario Municipal Association
Public Input Coordinator, Conservation and Source Protection Branch, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Appendix 1 – Our Key Concerns

Our Key Concerns

Uncertainty about the Relationship between OPAC, Municipalities and CAs

Schedule 3 of Bill 68 states that the OPAC shall consist of at least five and not more than 12 members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, who shall form the independent Board of Directors for the Agency. This independent Board of Directors will oversee the activities of the OPCA. If OPCA is funded by CAs via their municipalities then how do they retain control of how the agency impacts the work and budget of the CA?

The creation of the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) provides a unique opportunity to rekindle the relationship with CAs and municipalities. However, there is insufficient information to effectively comment on how OPAC and its associated Board of Directors will interact with CAs, their respective Boards and municipalities.

Nevertheless, the unfolding of this relationship will need to be based on the principles of good governance, while fostering collaboration to ensure CAs programs and services continue to be effectively and efficiently delivered.

Resource issues resulting from changing landscapes and climate will continue to emerge. Time will be of the essence to respond swiftly, as it has been frequently in past decades with more climate related flood events. The key to successfully managing outcomes is ongoing collaboration among the Ontario government, municipalities, and conservation authorities.

Insufficient Evidence to Support Consolidation

The proposal to consolidate 36 CAs to 7 regional CAs is not supported by any evidence-based rationale or business case, cost-benefit analysis, business case/feasibility study or transition work and funding plan for the amalgamation. The timeframe provided for such a change is incredibly short, which greatly increases the likelihood of failure.

For decades, the CA model has fostered successful watershed programs which have reduced potential flood, drought, and erosion losses, restored damaged ecosystems, protected drinking water, and improved water quality. The strength of the model lies in the emphasis on local decision making, collaborative partnerships, and on-the-ground programs. While amalgamations have occurred in the past, they have been at the request of municipalities, and there have been shared resource issues within similar watersheds.

This is not the first instance in which the province has suggested the significant consolidation of CAs. In 1989, the Ballinger Report (also referred to as the Ballinger-Hopcroft Report) was submitted to the government by Mr. Bill Ballinger, MPP and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing under the David Peterson administration. The review was prompted by concerns regarding disparities in the capacity and expertise among Conservation Authorities, inconsistencies in program standards and delivery—particularly in plan review and permitting—as well as varying funding levels across authorities.

Following extensive consultations throughout Ontario, the report put forward a recommendation to reduce the number of CAs from 33 to 19. Further recommendations addressed redefining

core mandates, modernizing governance, and restructuring the provincial-municipal funding relationship. Although there was some provincial support for recommendations related to the core mandate and funding, the report did not ultimately receive provincial approval. The process was stalled by factors such as an impending provincial election and increased recessionary pressures.

Additionally, there was significant opposition from municipal leaders regarding amalgamation, most notably from Wardens and Mayors in eastern and southwestern Ontario, who expressed concerns over potential losses of autonomy and local decision-making authority in watershed management priorities. Similar reactions from the municipal sector may again pose challenges to any proposal advocating for the regionalization or consolidation of CAs.

The proposed amalgamation covers vast areas with different landscapes, water systems and resource management issues and priorities. The proposal creates more questions than answers, such as:

- What specific problems are you trying to solve through the amalgamation, and why is this proposal the only alternative put forward?
- What governance model will regional CAs use? How much influence will each municipality have in decisions?
- What is the process for setting municipal levies? If a CA generates most of its budget through its own revenues, will it be required to support other CAs that are merged with it? How will the haves and the have nots be treated through this process and how will that impact their capacity?
- How will the CA charitable foundations be impacted? Will they need new Letters Patent?
- What are the anticipated costs associated with amalgamation, and which parties are responsible for funding it?
- How will the Source Protection Areas (SPAs) operate, given that the proposed amalgamation splits several SPAs and merges others?

Loss of Local Watershed Management Governance and Oversight

The proposal to move towards a regional watershed-based framework for CAs in Ontario by consolidating 36 CAs to 7 regional CAs runs counter to the founding principles of the *Conservation Authorities Act* in 1946. Specifically, resource management is most effective when organized by watershed units, and communities within a river basin could form CAs with provincial backing if they chose to collaborate. CAs deliver programs and services to address local watershed needs on behalf of municipalities. Municipalities risk losing effective and meaningful control over locally funded assets, dams, conservation lands, and permitting decisions.

While provincial communications maintain that nothing will change – that CAs will retain leadership over local programs and services, and that regional CA Boards will continue to exercise comprehensive governance – including the responsibility to approve budgets – the mandate of the newly established OPCA encompasses a much broader range of authority. Without a blueprint, we remain skeptical of the understanding and true intent of this amalgamation.

The OPCA's mandate includes direct oversight of CA governance, operations, and delivery of programs and services. In practice, this means the Agency will systematically assess the effectiveness of CAs, undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of their financial performance, and play a central role in guiding strategic planning activities. Importantly, the OPCA is empowered to issue binding directives as well as recommended guidance to CAs, thereby shaping both compliance and best practices across the sector.

It is critical to note that the OPCA's jurisdiction is not limited solely to provincially mandated programs such as natural hazard management and source protection. Rather, the scope of its oversight extends to all CA programs and services. This includes initiatives delivered on behalf of municipalities, as well as those programs and services independently developed by local Boards to meet specific watershed challenges and community needs. The wide-ranging nature of this oversight signals a significant and unwarranted expansion of provincial involvement in local watershed management and governance.

While CA Boards may retain governance over CAs, the scope and meaningfulness of their role could be diminished by the provincial oversight and authority of the OPCA. Despite assurances from the province that this will not happen, there is no evidence or any details as to how this local representation will be maintained. This absence of detail about how OPCA, CAs, and municipalities will work together raises questions about transparency and contributes to further uncertainty.

Scale of Proposed Regional CAs is Impractical

The regional CAs, as proposed, are geographically vast, ranging in some cases from 18,500 km² to 25,000 km². One of the proposals goes so far as to merge the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) into a new “Huron–Superior Regional Conservation Authority,” a region that stretches more than 1,300 kilometres south and includes municipalities as far away as southern Ontario.

Compounding the proposed vast geography, these new regional authorities are proposed to serve anywhere between 28-81 municipalities. We assert that the proposed entities are excessively large to ensure effective and equitable municipal representation or efficient watershed management. Moreover, certain areas possess distinct geographical characteristics and concerns, potentially leading to uneven allocation of resources or efforts across the suggested regions.

Larger Regional Bureaucracies Reduce Efficiency Gains

The proposed amalgamation is likely to disrupt service delivery, potentially hindering the province's progress toward economic development and growth. Based on our experience, the current CA structures are nimble and responsive because they stay informed about initiatives and issues, understand local stakeholders, and resolve problems quickly and efficiently. Large regional organizations may result in longer review times, lower standards of service, and diminished collaboration with developers, lake associations, and local governments. Compounding this regionalization will be another level of oversight created through the OPCA, potentially creating even more bureaucratic barriers.

Sacrificing the Key Principle of Integrated Watershed Management

CAs were designed to align with watershed boundaries, rather than municipal boundaries, so they can address hazards and resource issues specific to each drainage basin. Since every watershed differs in hydrology, geology, topography, and land use, each faces distinct challenges.

CA staff have also developed vital local expertise that informs their work, from flood forecasting and warning to environmental restoration programs, which must be maintained if CAs are consolidated. Consolidation would not automatically harmonize services across regions because watershed needs and priorities vary.

Expansion of boundaries will complicate planning, permitting, emergency management, and municipal collaboration.

Challenging the Myth of Inefficiencies

Despite CAs having responded effectively to the last six years of provincially directed changes, addressing concerns for timeliness and focus on core mandates, the province continues to cite inefficiencies as the primary rationale for amalgamation. We maintain that this assumption should be critically examined, considering the available evidence.

In 2019, to ensure consistency in annual reporting for CA permit reviews, Conservation Ontario implemented a standardized template and framework for monitoring review timelines. Benchmarks were established, setting a standard of 30 days for minor permits and 90 days for major permits, thereby promoting uniform reporting across all CAs. In recent years, CAs have invested substantially in new database software and process enhancements to maintain high-quality development review services.

The 2024 annual report presents data on permits received as of April 1, 2024, in accordance with the updated legislative and regulatory framework. During this period, over 7,180 permits were issued by the 36 CAs. Ninety-six percent (96%) of these permits were issued within the

required timelines.⁷ Further, some CAs also have longstanding reciprocal staff-sharing arrangements with other CAs to ensure no interruption in service and no permit delays. There are occasional inefficiencies, as is typical in any agency, but these are now exceptions rather than the standard.

Need For Provincial Guidance

We recognise that there may be inconsistencies in the decisions made by CAs regarding permit applications and related planning matters under the CAA and Ontario Regulation 41/24.

However, we believe that the provision of more robust technical guidance at the provincial level would be of greater benefit to achieving consistency among CAs, rather than initiating structural amalgamation.

For instance, the province has been asked over several years for direction on when and how Regional Control facilities should be used to support new development and manage stormwater and flooding. CAs still await guidance on this issue. Similarly, CAs have requested provincial technical and policy guidance regarding flood spill management in existing urban areas and on establishing access standards for flood hazard zones. This guidance has not yet been forthcoming to date and would be very beneficial also in addressing those consistency issues noted elsewhere in this document. These are just two examples of many policy challenges that face CAs around regulating natural hazard areas and managing natural hazards.

Regulatory Fragmentation Continues

Both provincial and federal governments have created overlapping, sometimes conflicting legislation, each with its own administrative process. This complexity increases costs and inefficiency and doesn't always achieve the intended results. New issues are generally met with more laws, adding to regulatory burdens that can hinder the economy and affect landowners. CAs, as service providers, often sit at the intersection between the public and government and may be mistakenly viewed as part of the problem.⁸ Red tape reduction needs a true examination of where laws, regulations and policies are conflicting, inconsistent or outdated.

Risks to Property and Management of Hazards and Dam Infrastructure

The protection of property and management of hazards is intrinsic to many of the multi-disciplinary plans and policies of municipalities across Ontario. CAs collectively manage flood and erosion control infrastructure requiring local expertise and knowledge, and 24/7 operational readiness. The work of CAs, in conjunction with their municipal partners, helps our province prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change, ultimately becoming more resilient for

⁷ Conservation Ontario. 2024. Annual Report. Conservation Impact. Valuing Positive Contribution through Conversation. Pg. 11.

⁸ Conservation Ontario, 2012. Watershed Management Futures for Ontario. Conservation Ontario Whitepaper.

the future. The proposed consolidation may jeopardize local natural hazard management capacity, locally stationed staff, and continuity of infrastructure operations.

CAs' regulation of natural hazardous areas is essential for emergency preparedness and prevention, reducing risk to life and property, protecting flood and erosion control infrastructure, and increasing resiliency to climate change.

The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario [warned in 2022](#) that more extreme rainfall associated with climate change will continue to increase the risk of flooding, straining public infrastructure expenses. That same year, the [Auditor General](#) also warned that the majority of municipalities in Ontario are unable to map urban flood risk due to a lack of data, expertise and funding.

Parts of Southern Ontario are experiencing [an increase](#) of two to three more heavy rainfall days per year on average. As floods increase in frequency and intensity, [homeowners' insurance costs are rising](#), creating significant financial challenges for many families.

Flooding is [Ontario's costliest natural hazard](#) and is expected to become [an even bigger threat](#) in the future. Any recommended changes to CAs should enhance their capacity to reduce flood risks and safeguard both life and property. However, it is unclear how the proposed consolidation would accomplish this goal.

Lag in Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Investments

CAs operate and maintain 900 dams, dykes, channels and other erosion control structures along rivers and shorelines valued at \$3.8 billion in 2019 dollars. Water and erosion control infrastructure managed and maintained by CAs helps to avoid more than \$150 million annually in damages to properties.⁹ Many of these structures are coming to the end of their design life and will require significant investment to ensure that the infrastructure continues to provide the protections now and into the future, with considerations for climate change.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) provides financial support to critical Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECl). This program provides funding to support up to 50% of project funding for watershed studies, dam and channel maintenance and repairs. The program is delivered through a municipal – provincial – conservation authority partnership. The province provides project funding of \$5M, matched by another \$5M from municipalities, and then implemented by the CAs.

For many years, this funding was capped at \$5 million, yet the program was oversubscribed. In 2020, the WECl Committee, among others, advocated for the province to make further

⁹ 2022. [Conservation Ontario. 2022 Provincial Budget Consultation.](#)

investments in this critical infrastructure, given the benefit to local communities across the province, and ultimately, Ontario's economic recovery.¹⁰

In 2020/21, the province approved \$10 million in WECI funding for 68 projects across 21 CAs. Despite the program being oversubscribed by almost two-fold in 2020/2021, with an estimated total project cost of more than \$19 million for 102 project submissions from 30 CAs across the Province in 2020/2021, the funding levels returned to \$5M. This funding is inadequate for future water and erosion control infrastructure needs.

Continued and adequate investment in both current and future infrastructure is essential for the effective management of flooding and erosion moving forward.

Breaking Trust – Risks to Locally Acquired Assets

Conservation Authorities are responsible for owning or managing 150,000 hectares of natural areas, including forests, wetlands, areas of natural and scientific interest, recreational lands, natural heritage and cultural sites, and land for flood and erosion control within each of their watersheds. Of these lands, there are approximately 500 Conservation Areas, with more than 300 that are publicly accessible. These public treasures make up approximately 80,000 hectares. These lands protect important natural features, provide recreational opportunities for people to enjoy, such as hiking, canoeing, camping, snowshoeing and many other outdoor activities, as well as living classrooms for schools, nature groups, and others to explore and learn about nature. Over six million Ontarians visit these areas each year,¹¹ supporting the local economy and tourism.

In some cases, thousands of these hectares have been donated to CAs with the expectation of local stewardship. Agreements will need to be updated or renegotiated with a new entity.

Regionalization risks breaking that trust. Decisions regarding these lands and resources must remain with the local communities who use and maintain them.

This point also applies to the Foundations and Boards of Directors that have been established to secure donations and private endowments for parks, trails and other stewardship initiatives. The proposed CA amalgamations could easily stifle CAs' ability to raise funds for local initiatives. To further complicate matters, each Foundation has its own letter patent and Board of Directors.

Many CAs also have reserve funds that have accumulated over decades through contributions by local municipalities and their taxpayers. It would be inequitable and unfair for these reserves

¹⁰ [Letter from Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Committee on the Need for Reallocation of In-Year Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure \(WECI\) Funds to Kathy Woeller, Director, Integration Branch, Regional Operations Division, MNRF, dated April 23, 2020.](#)

¹¹ Conservation Ontario. [Conservation Authorities are Ontario's Second Largest Landowners.](#)

to be distributed using a regional amalgamation model. Financial reserves created over decades through contributions by municipalities to their respective CAs must be retained.

Continuation of the Disproportionate Funding Model

The proposed amalgamation materials have been silent on how the regional CA model will be funded. This is an essential piece of the puzzle – without which the full implication of the proposal cannot be evaluated. Today, the typical breakdown of funding sources for Conservation Authorities is as follows¹²:

- Municipal levies – 53%
- Self-generated revenue – 35%
- Provincial grants & Special Projects – 8%
- Federal Grants or Contracts – 4%

However, the actual proportion of funding can differ significantly across the 36 Conservation Authorities. For example:

- Essex Region Conservation Authority relies on non-levy funding for approximately 70 percent of its operating budget, drawing from self-generated revenue, grants, and foundation support.
- Conservation Halton, in its 2025 total budget, indicates that only 2% of the funding is from the province and 19% from municipalities. Self-generated revenue, grants, and other sources minimize the impact on the municipal levy.
- Conservation Sudbury receives just over 20 percent of its budget through provincial and federal transfers and grants, while less than 25 percent is sourced from self-generated revenue.
- Grand River Conservation Authority occupies an intermediate position, with under 40 percent of its funding provided by municipal levies and about 50 percent obtained from self-generated revenue.
- To the east, municipal levies for the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority account for 54% of the funding, with the province contributing 5%. Municipalities within the region of the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority fund approximately 68% of the annual operating budget, compared to a combined provincial and federal contribution of 5%.

The CA model has achieved tremendous successes across Ontario. However, we acknowledge that CAs' ability to deliver relevant programs to address resource challenges may vary in scope and intensity from one watershed to another, influenced by elements such as climate, landscape features, geology, water movement, patterns of water consumption as well as the local

¹² Conservation Ontario. [Typical breakdown of funding sources for Conservation Authorities.](#)

population, level of municipal support, and their ability to generate income from fees, land rental, and other sources.

CAs that have a small population base may lack sufficient funding to hire subject matter experts to competently deliver some programs, including programs mandated by the Province of Ontario, such as administering provincial regulations, undertaking hazard modelling and mapping, and undertaking technical watershed studies and analysis.

Historically, provincial funding was initially the primary source of revenue for CAs, including shared funding for infrastructure projects. However, in 1995, under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris, Ontario's Progressive Conservatives drastically reduced provincial funding to CAs as part of its "Common Sense Revolution," slashing the budget for conservation programs from \$50 million to \$8 million annually, and limited it to hazard management. This significant cut severely impacted operations, leading CAs to lay off 20–60% of their staff and making it more difficult to continue the same level of investment and activity, including flood management, stewardship and watershed management. These cuts also disproportionately impacted smaller CAs with more rural municipalities, as the previous funding formula that was in place allowed rural CAs to access a higher proportion of funding for necessary projects from the province, equalizing the playing field.

Ultimately, despite these enormous financial challenges, CAs pivoted to secure alternative local funding sources once the province allowed CAs to start charging fees. This new financial situation also meant that municipalities had to reassess which watershed-based programs to retain. Although many activities were curtailed, programs continued with the assistance of partnership arrangements with local environmental groups or adjacent CAs. Municipalities also became the primary funder of managing natural hazards and many striking agreements with their CAs to support their environmental needs.

Since that time, municipalities have come together through our 36 CAs to address aging dams, manage natural hazards, enhance land conservation, provide water data and flood warnings to landowners, while also delivering on local stewardship programs and outdoor education initiatives.

Without a commitment of additional provincial funds and a shared approach to facilitate program development and the proposed CA amalgamations, plans to strengthen the work of CAs will be at risk.

Through a reinvestment in provincial funding, the OPCA has the opportunity to improve the capacity of all CAs to provide comparable services and ensure that flood and watershed management tools and infrastructure are repaired, restored and modernized to meet the challenges of the future.

Achievements of Source Protection Plans at Risk

In June 2000, following the tragic incident of bacterial contamination of the water supply in Walkerton, Ontario, in May 2000, the Government of Ontario established a public inquiry – known now as the Walkerton Inquiry. Following the Walkerton inquiry, Justice O'Connor made 121 recommendations on a wide range of areas related to protecting drinking water. These recommendations are the building blocks of Ontario's drinking water protection framework. Justice O'Connor's first recommendation was that drinking water should be protected by developing watershed-based source protection plans.¹³

CAs stepped up again to protect Ontarians. Under the *Clean Water Act, 2006*, 19 local multi-stakeholder source protection committees were established, guiding source water protection efforts in source protection areas across Ontario. The 38 source protection areas are based on Ontario's 36 CAs, the Severn Sound Environmental Association, and the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula. Some of the source protection areas are grouped into larger source protection regions.

The Committees were supported by the Conservation Authorities' Boards of Directors, which, under the *Clean Water Act*, are referred to as "Source Protection Authorities." The Committees, working in collaboration with CAs, gathered science-based technical knowledge on which informed consensus-based decisions were made. Policies were developed in an open and consultative manner that continue to be effective, economical and appropriate for local communities. This supporting role by Conservation Authorities in source water protection continues to this day.

The proposed amalgamation of the 36 CAs to 7 regional CAs does not reference how Source Water Protection Areas (SPAs) and Regions will be maintained. For example, Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) is currently part of the CTC (Credit Valley, Toronto and Region-Central Lake Ontario), Source Protection Region (SPR). This proposal would see the Credit Valley Conservation Authority carved off from the CTC SPR and combined with Halton-Hamilton SPR and Niagara SPR. This configuration would cross the boundaries of three existing SPRs, potentially creating administrative and jurisdictional issues and undermining the principal recommendation advanced by Justice O'Connor twenty-five years ago.

Any proposed amalgamations of CAs must respect this fundamental premise of watershed-based source protection efforts and the governance model for source protection areas.

Amalgamation Costs to be Transferred to Municipalities

The amalgamation of 36 CAs to 7 regional CAs will likely result in substantial unfunded costs, including IT integration, HR restructuring, renaming/rebranding, land title work, asset transfers, and legal harmonization. These costs are unknown but have the potential to be substantive (in the hundreds of millions of dollars) when one considers the amalgamation expenses in 2001

¹³ Ontario. [Clean Water Act, 2006](#)

associated with the creation of the new cities of Ottawa, Hamilton and Greater Sudbury with expanded areas and populations.

By February 2001, the province decided that forcing amalgamation was too politically costly; in response to those affected municipalities, the province had to subsequently provide transition funding of \$31 million to Hamilton and \$108 million to Ottawa.¹⁴ The O'Brien report, which recommended the amalgamation of the City of Greater Sudbury, estimated the transition costs would be around \$10 million and suggested the province should cover them.¹⁵ Any proposed amalgamation would also detract from implementing on-the-ground programs.

Although the existing Toronto and Region CA is not proposed to be amalgamated with any other CA, it too will still see substantial transition costs associated with rebranding to its new proposed name, Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority – a needless expense.

Municipalities should not be responsible for the impact or costs of any provincial restructuring efforts.

New Provincial Agency Will Impose Additional Costs

Bill 68 empowers the OPCA to recover its operational and staffing costs to implement its mandate as described in the legislation. While not specifically stated, we are concerned that recovery of OPAC's costs will be borne by CAs through municipal levies. This will create an excessive financial strain for municipalities and will run counter to the principle of municipal-provincial partnerships for conservation.

Further, what say would CAs have in the budget and control for the agency? As the OPCA is a provincial agency, its budgetary expenditures should be borne by the provincial government.

The province has also been silent on whether it intends to issue a direction to CAs to reallocate their current funding levies from Conservation Ontario (CO) to this new Agency. Such a direction would place CO in an untenable position. CO was established in 1981 to engage and support Conservation Authorities in matters of common interest and to shape effective policy relating to Conservation Authorities. CO is directed by a Council comprised of appointed and/or elected municipal officials from the 36 Conservation Authorities Boards of Directors and Conservation Authorities staff to ensure representation across the range of CAs and their unique circumstances.

To do this, they maintain technical expertise in most of the functions of the CAs and facilitate collaborations and working groups of technical experts in an effort to address consistency and issues across CAs.

How would even as few as 7 regional CAs effectively engage with the agency or other provincial ministries without an umbrella organization? Will the agency assume that role?

As the OPCA is a provincial agency, its budgetary expenditures should be borne by the provincial government.

¹⁴ CBC News. [Province pays out to ease amalgamation headaches](#). February 2001.

¹⁵ Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (1999). **Report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on Local Government Reform for Sudbury**. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Attachment 3

City of Ottawa Motion 2025-71-34 re: Consolidation of Eastern Ontario CAs

Moved by W. Lo and Seconded by C. Kitts

That the Rules of Procedure be suspended to consider the following motion due to the comment period for the relevant provincial legislation regarding the proposed consolidation of Eastern Ontario Conservation Authorities closes 22 December 2025.

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario has proposed a consolidation of the province's conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities, including the merger of the Cataraqui, Mississippi, Raisin, Rideau, and South Nation conservation authorities into the St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority; and

WHEREAS the St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority will cover more than 18,500 square kilometres and be funded by levies from 46 member municipalities, with the City of Ottawa contributing approximately 50 per cent of the total levies; and

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario has proposed the establishment of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, which will provide centralised leadership and oversight of the regional conservation authorities; and

WHEREAS the proposed agency will be authorised to recover its costs from the current and future regional conservation authorities; and

WHEREAS the existing conservation authorities each have individual governance, municipal levy, and financial and reserve structures, ownership of assets such as dams/dykes/levies as well as plans for investment within their respective watersheds; and

WHEREAS the work by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks on the conservation authority consolidation and establishment of the new agency continues; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Mayor write to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks urging the Government of Ontario:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, should the provincial government's current proposals proceed, the Mayor request that the Government of Ontario:

- To maintain local, municipally-governed, watershed-based Conservation Authorities to ensure effective natural resource and hazard management, transparent local services, bilingualism obligations, and accountability over municipal levy dollars; and
- To work collaboratively with municipalities and current conservation authorities to identify opportunities for improved consistency, modernisation, and shared service approaches within the existing watershed-based governance model; and
- To explore options for a Lower Ottawa River-based solution (i.e. merger of the Mississippi Valley, Rideau Valley, and South Nation conservation authorities) aligned with the objectives of the proposed mergers without combining water basins; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, should the provincial government's current proposals proceed, the Mayor request that the Government of Ontario:

- Consider options for a Lower Ottawa River-based solution (i.e. merger of the Mississippi Valley, Rideau Valley, and South Nation conservation authorities) aligned with their objectives without combining water basins; and
- Protect municipalities and taxpayers from any financial pressures from the merger and new oversight agency; and
- Preserve the current conservation authorities' capital reserve funds in separate legacy accounts to fund projects within the respective boundaries of the current conservation authorities; and
- Ensure under the new governance, there is a clear understanding of maintenance, lifecycle and ownership of assets that are currently the responsibility of conservation authorities and local governments; and
- Ensure proper representation of municipalities based on collected levy contribution, population size and scope of undertakings within the governance structure of any future conservation authority.

Carried



Fall River Regulatory Flood and Erosion Hazard Mapping Study

TO: The Chair and Members of the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Juraj Cunderlik, Director, Engineering

REPORT: 3534/26, January 12, 2026.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Directors:

- a. Adopt the report Fall River Regulatory Flood and Erosion Hazard Mapping, dated December 2025, and the associated GIS-based Regulation Limit lines and floodplain maps as the delineation of areas along the Fall River that are susceptible to erosion and flooding during the regional flood standard as defined in Schedule 1 of Ontario Regulation 41/24; and*
- b. Direct that the report, maps and Regulation Limit be used in the implementation of Ontario Regulation 41/24.*

1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to summarize the *Fall River Regulatory Flood and Erosion Hazard Mapping* report and secure approval for the report and new regulatory limits.

The Fall River watershed is a major tributary to the Mississippi River. Prior to this study it had no hazard mapping, and the risk of erosion and flooding was not well understood. A 2022 *Flood Risk Assessment Study* identified the Fall River as one of MVCA's highest flood risk areas. In response, MVCA initiated this project to develop regulatory flood and erosion hazard mapping and successfully secured funding under the Federal Hazard Identification and Mapping Program (FHIMP) to complete this work.

The hazard mapping project was completed in collaboration with Tay Valley Township and Lanark County and both technical and financial support from Natural Resources

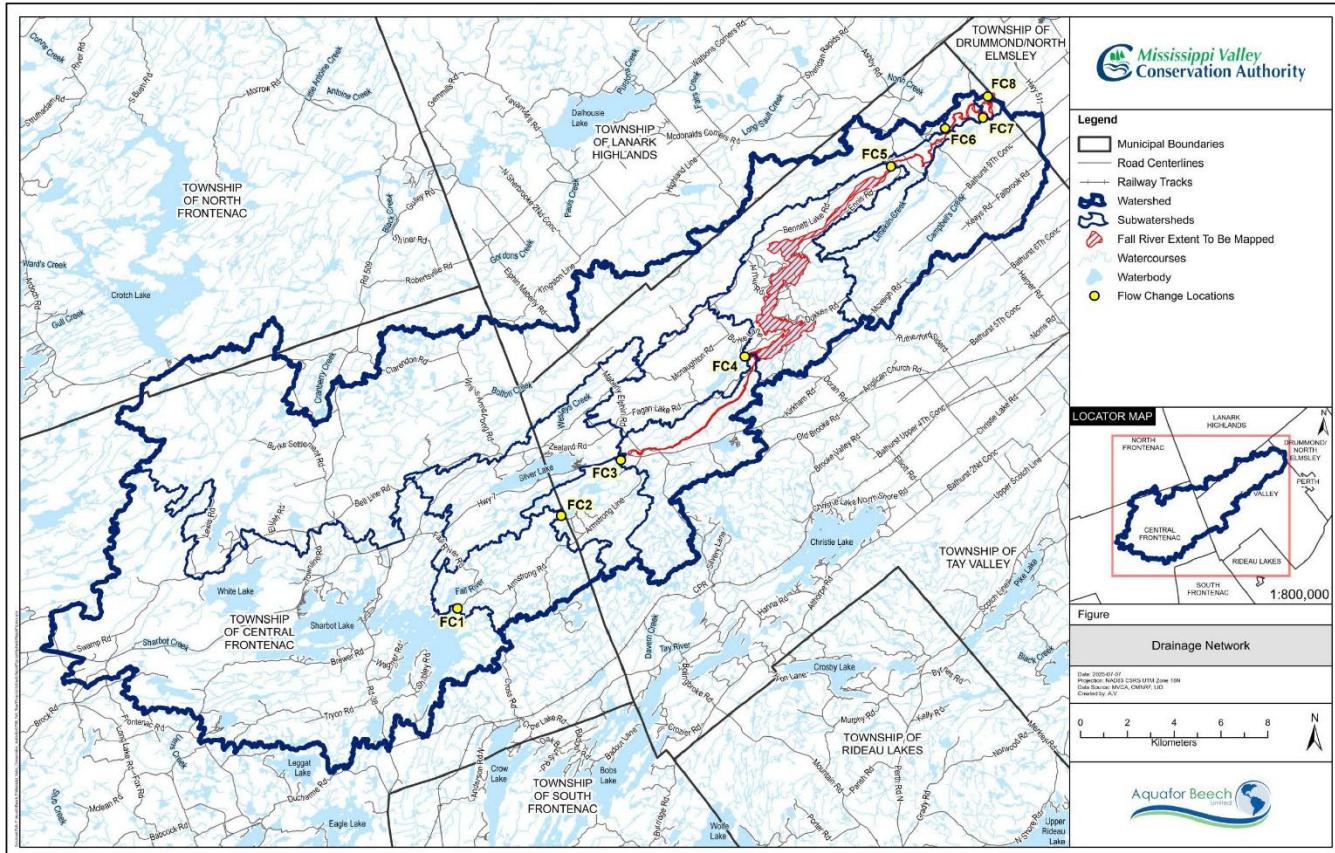
Canada (NRCan). The resultant mapping will help MVCA and our municipal partners understand and mitigate hazards and reduce the impacts of erosion and flooding in the Fall River watershed. The mapping will also inform MVCA's flood forecasting and warning and capital infrastructure renewal programs.

2.0 STUDY AREA

The Fall River watershed is one of the largest tributaries of the Mississippi River with a drainage area of 6,486 km². The river flows northeast from its headwaters in Sharbot Lake through the communities of Maberly, Bennett Lake and Fallbrook before discharging into the Mississippi River upstream of Mississippi Lake. While Maberly and Fallbrook are the largest communities along the watercourse, many properties and existing structures are located along the shores of Bennett Lake and are susceptible to flooding.

The study area examined approximately 45 km of the Fall River from the outlet of Sharbot Lake to its confluence with the Mississippi River, as shown in Figure 1. Regulatory flood and erosion hazard mapping was produced for a 32 km section of the river from the village of Maberly to the confluence with the Mississippi River.

Figure 1: Study Area



3.0 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The engineering analysis and the regulatory flood and erosion hazard maps were completed in accordance with the MNRF standards found in *Technical Guide River & Stream Systems: Flooding Hazard Limit* (MNRF, 2002), *Erosion Hazard Limit* (MNRF, 2002), and Federal Flood Mapping Guidelines (NRCan, 2018-2022). The *Fall River Regulatory Flood and Erosion Hazard Mapping* report documents the work completed, which included:

- Preparation of topographic data based on Eastern Ontario LiDAR acquisition (Airborne Imaging, December 2022).
- Bathymetric survey of the Fall River using Seafloor HydroLite Plus dual frequency echosounder technology.
- Survey of hydraulic structures (bridges and culverts; 14 structures in total, 6 were surveyed and 8 had structural drawings)
- Hydrologic analysis to estimate flood flows for various return periods at key locations along the river system. This analysis was completed using a HEC-HMS hydrologic model.
- Climate change analysis (1:350-year flood event) to assess future floodplain under climate change.
- Hydraulic analysis using a HEC-RAS model to estimate flood levels associated with the flood flows.
- The plotting of erosion hazard lines and flood lines on topographic maps to delineate areas that are susceptible to flooding during the Regulatory (1:100 year) flood event and the delineation of Regulation Limits based on provincial standards.

A technical review of the above work was completed by MVCA and federal technical staff from NRCan's FHIMP office, with comments addressed and incorporated in the final report. The final report provides the technical basis for the recommended hazard maps defining areas subject to flood and erosion hazards during a Regulatory (1:100 year) flood event. The final products of this project include the following:

- The Fall River Regulatory Floodplain Mapping report dated December 2025
- Flood and erosion hazard limit lines in GIS format (shape files)
- The HEC-HMS and HEC-RAS model files
- The mapping schedules (13 floodplain maps) prepared at a scale of 1:5000.

Floodplain maps were reviewed to identify potential flood prone areas. Several areas were identified where local roads are overtapped by more than 0.3 m during the regulatory flood event, which precludes “safe access” under the CA Act to properties and residences. Affected roads include Ennis Road, Dokken Road, Beach Road and Noel Road. Flood prone areas were also identified along the shores of Bennett Lake, which will not have safe access along the waterfront during high flow.

Modelling indicates that no bridges would be overtapped during the regulatory flood event.

Affected properties and infrastructure are summarized in Table 1. A detailed assessment of flood prone areas can be found in Appendix I of the engineering report. Figure 2 provides an example of a floodplain map sheet produced in this project.

**Table 1: Summary of the Affected Properties, Structures, and Infrastructure
in Flood Prone Areas.**

Description	Count
Affected Properties (total)	397
Properties with buildings in the regulation limit	207
Properties without Safe Access	91
Residences (Permanent and Seasonal) in the regulatory floodplain	34
Residences (Permanent and Seasonal) without Safe Access	166
Businesses	1
Businesses without Safe Access	1
Public Roads	5
Public Roads without Safe Access	5
Bridges	0

4.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A Public Open House was held on November 27, 2025, to present the draft floodplain maps to the public and answer questions. The Open House was advertised in the *Lanark Era, Frontenac News*, and on the websites and social media accounts of Tay Valley Township and MVCA. Details of the Open House were also shared with the Fagan & Bennett Lakes’ Association for inclusion in their newsletter. Notification letters were mailed to all affected landowners. Draft floodplain maps were available on the MVCA website prior to the Open House. Thirty-two (32) residents attended the Open House.

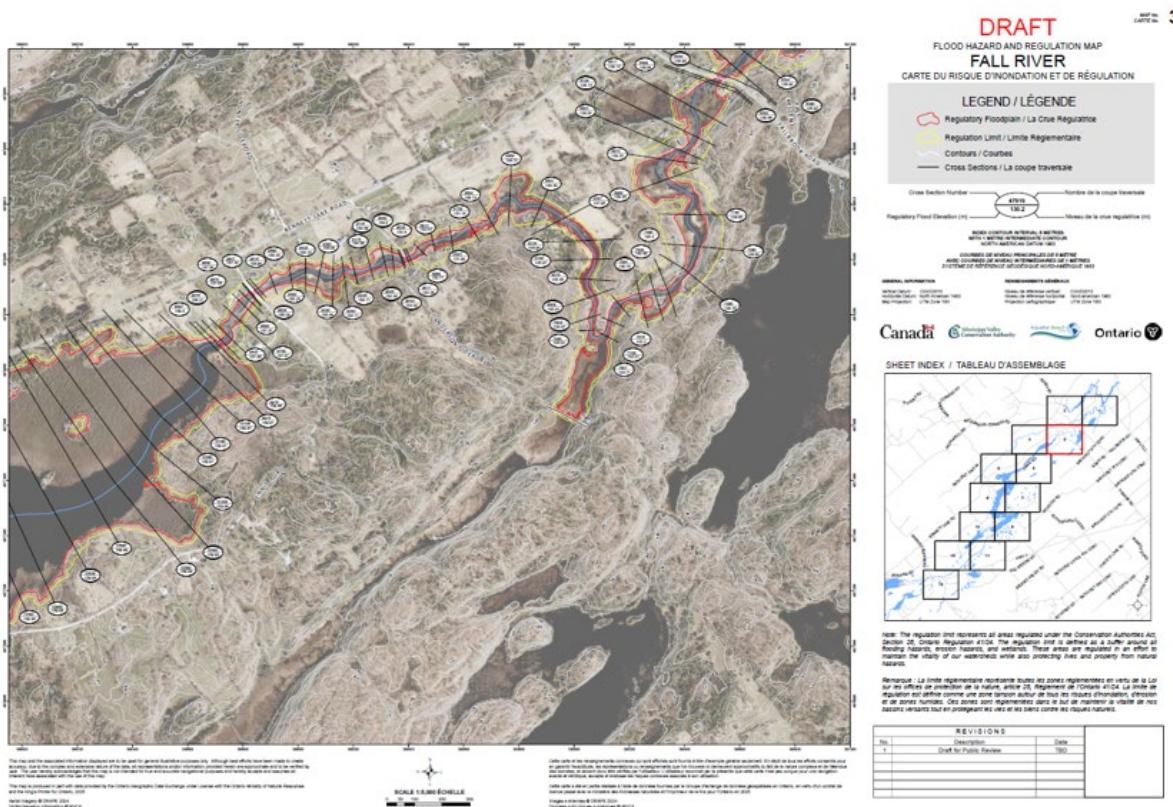
Comments raised by the public were discussed internally and with the consultant and addressed in the final report and floodplain maps.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The analysis documented in *Fall River Regulatory Floodplain Mapping* report meets the standards found in the *Technical Guide River & Stream Systems: Flooding Hazard Limit* (MNRF, 2002) and therefore, the resulting Regulatory (1:100 year) floodplain and Regulation Limit delineation is suitable for use in MVCA's Regulation mapping as well as for municipal land use planning purposes.

Following their approval by MVCA's Board of Directors, the engineering report, hazard maps and new regulation limits will be used in the implement *Ontario Regulation 41/24* and will be forwarded to Tay Valley Township and the Lanark County for inclusion in their planning documents. As well, PDF copies of the maps will be made available for download from the MVCA website. The report and the model files will be available to the public upon request in accordance with MVCA's fee schedule and the acceptance of the standard "terms of use" that apply to the release of MVCA data and information.

Figure 2: Floodplain Map



CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

Production and approval of the Fall River engineering study and hazards maps supports delivery of the following 2026-2030 goal and objectives:

Goal 2: Expand Use of Science-Based Tools

- a. Implement a Hazard Mapping and Management Strategy including funding approach.
- b. Carry out climate scenario watershed impact studies.



Proposed Fee Schedule Amendments

TO: The Chair and Members of the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Stacy Millard, Treasurer and Ben Dopson, Manager, Planning and Stewardship

REPORT: 3535/26, January 12, 2026.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Directors approve:

- a) 2026 update of Schedules A through C of MVCA's Fee Schedule as set out in Report #3535/26;*
- b) Posting and circulation of the new fees in accordance with MVCA's Fee Policy; and*
- c) That the new fees take effect March 1, 2026, pending no major concerns regarding the proposed changes.*

1.0 BACKGROUND

In December 2022, the Province of Ontario issued a Minister's Direction to not change fees for any program or service related to reviewing and commenting on planning and development related proposals, land use planning policies, or for permits issued by conservation authorities. Extensions to the Minister's direction were issued for 2024 and 2025 through letters to all Conservation Authorities. MVCA, Conservation Ontario, and other CAs have repeatedly requested that the freeze on fees be lifted. It now appears that the province has lifted the fee freeze, as no extension letter was received from the province concerning 2026 fees.

Given the absence of any direction from the province, this report makes several recommendations regarding changes to planning and regulatory fees. Fee changes are proposed to take effect March 1, so that any direction that may be received from the province in the interim can be addressed as needed.

2.0 2026 FEE SCHEDULE

MVCA charges fees for a selection of programs and services in accordance with the Board-approved Fee Policy and Schedules, and section 21.2 of the *CA Act*.

Following consultation with Rideau Valley and South Nation conservation authorities, the three conservation authorities are recommending a 3% increase to all fees related to reviewing and commenting on planning and development related proposals, land use planning policies, and for permit applications. Through this report, staff are also recommending, largely to bring MVCA into alignment with RVCA and SNC fee schedules:

1. An amendment to the fee for *Zoning By-Law, Amendments, Minor Variance Applications, Site Plan – Single Residential* to correct a previous error to bring MVCA's fees in line with those of RVCA and SNC.
2. Addition of a fee for the lifting of a 30 cm Reserve, highlighted in yellow.
3. Addition of a fee for Part Lot Control, highlighted in yellow.
4. Amendments to the descriptions of all categories in Schedule B to provide clarity.
5. An increase to the security deposit for minor projects from \$1,000 to \$1,800 and for major projects from \$2,000 to \$3,500.
6. Addition of a security deposit requirement for wetland compensation projects of \$12,350/ha, highlighted in yellow.

Recommended fee changes align with the following key principles set out in MVCA's fee policy, to:

- Recover full-costs where feasible.
- Balance user-pay principle with maintaining affordable access for all.
- Harmonize fees with neighbouring conservation authorities in shared municipalities where feasible.

3.0 CIRCULATION & EFFECTIVE DATE

Provincial regulations and MVCA's Fee Policy require public notification and circulation of proposed changes to member municipalities with a comment period of 30 days.

These will be carried out following Board approval, with the intent of implementing the fees on March 1, 2026, should no major concerns arise. No retroactive charges would apply.

4.0 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 4: Plan for Long Term Viability

- a. Invest in employees and succession planning.
- b. Develop and assess options for sustainable program delivery.
- c. Partner with others to pool resources for mutual success.
- d. Develop business plans for Category 3 programs and services.

ATTACHMENTS

- Fee Schedules 2026 A - C



MVCA Fee Schedule: 2026

Schedule "A" Fees

*3% increase to all fees over 2025 rates.

Planning Advisory Program

Planning Application Type	Fee for "natural hazards" & water quality and quantity matters & on-site services review (when required)
Official Plan Amendments (OPA)	
Minor	\$845
Major (private applications associated with urban expansion and/or major development application)	\$4,120
Zoning By-law Amendments, Minor Variance Applications, Site Plan – Single Residential	\$435
Site Plan	
Minor (Small commercial less than 0.8 ha, additions up to 200 sq. m.)	\$1,155
Major (Multiple Res., Commercial, Industrial, Institutional)	\$2,875
Consent to Sever (per application)	\$515
Clearance of Conditions (Severance or Variance)	\$195
Plan of Subdivision/Condominium (to provision of Conditions of Draft Approval)	\$4,245
Clearance of Conditions for Subdivision Registration (per phase)	\$2,135
Draft Plan Approval Revisions (alterations to site/plan layout)	\$2,135
Draft Plan Extensions (original conditions about to lapse)	\$4,245
Lifting of 30 cm Reserve	\$245
Part Lot Control	\$130

Note:

- Reactivation (all application types) – 50% reactivation fee based on the current schedule after two years of dormancy.
- A screening fee of \$130.00 will be charged for written responses to address minor issues.
- All fees are exclusive of the Technical Review Fees (see Schedule C) which are charged on a per issue basis in addition to the fees outlined in Schedule A.
- All fees must be received PRIOR to the release of written comments to an approval authority.
- The CA reserves the right to charge additional fees in the event that the review requires a substantially greater level of effort than normal, additional site visits etc. OR where additional processing past the initial submission period is required.

MVCA Fee Schedule: 2026

Schedule "B" Fees

*3% increase to all fees over 2025 rates.

~~Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses~~ Ontario Regulation 41/24, Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits

Application Type	Description	Fee
<u>Culvert</u> <u>(Water Crossing)</u>	Replacement (same dimension) \leq 30 m and \leq 1 m diameter/ <u>< 25 m length</u>	\$290
	Replacement (different dimension) or new \leq 1 m diameter/ <u>> 25 m length</u>	\$685
	<u>New or replacement</u> 1 m diameter - 3 m diameter	\$1,075
	<u>New or replacement</u> > 3 m diameter	\$2,115
	Superstructure or abutment works	\$685
<u>Infrastructure</u> (Bridge)	<u>Infrastructure Modification (bridges with span < 25 m)</u>	<u>\$1,075</u>
	<u>Infrastructure Modification (bridges with span > 25 m, storm water management pond, major utility crossing)</u>	<u>\$2,770</u>
	<u>New road bridge</u>	<u>\$2,770</u>
	<u>New pedestrian bridge</u>	<u>\$685</u>
Directional Drilling	Channel width \leq 3 m	\$290
	Channel width > 3 m	\$685
Fill Placement & Grading	Fill placement \leq 100 m ³ / Grading \leq 0.25 ha	\$290

Fill Placement (m ³) Grading (ha) (including septic beds, <u>temporary storage</u>)	Fill placement → 100 m ³ – 500 m ³ /Grading → 0.25 ha – 0.5 ha	\$710
	Fill placement → 500 m ³ – 1000 m ³ /Grading → 0.5 ha – 1.0 ha	\$1,110
	Fill placement → 1000 m ³ – 2000 m ³ /Grading → 1.0 ha – 2.0 ha	\$2,180
	<u>Resurfacing</u>	<u>\$290</u>
Buildings	Auxiliary building/structures and additions with a total gross floor area <u>≤ 2015 m²</u>	\$290
	Auxiliary buildings/structures and additions with a total gross floor area between <u>2015 m²</u> and 100 m ²	\$710
	Auxiliary buildings/structures and additions with a total gross floor area >100 m ²	
	New residential dwellings New single <u>Institutional, Industrial or Commercial Units</u> <u>commercial/institutional building</u>	\$1,110
	Multiple Residential <u>units</u> , Institutional, Industrial or Commercial <u>Building Units</u>	\$2,850
Shoreline Work & Watercourse Alteration <u>(erosion protection, channelization)</u>	Shoreline alterations <u>erosion protection, channelization</u> ≤ <u>30m</u> <u>15m</u>	\$290
	<u>Shoreline alterations between 15 m and 30 m</u>	<u>\$685</u>
	Shoreline alterations <u>between/protection</u> >30m and < 100 m Private residential and/or non-municipal agricultural drain cleanout	\$685

	Shoreline alterations <u>between/protection,</u> <u>channelization</u> 100 m <u>and</u> 500 m	\$1,075
	Shoreline alterations/ <u>protection,</u> <u>channelization</u> > 500 m	\$2,115
Docks	Shoreline disturbance > 2 m and/or total surface <u>area</u> > 20 m ²	\$290
Wetland Development /Interference within 30m <u>and 120m</u> of a Provincially Significant Wetland or non-evaluated wetland	Minor Review	\$290
	Area affected ≤ 0.5 ha	\$685
	Area affected > 0.5 ha and ≤ 1.0 ha	\$1,110
	Area affected → 1.0 ha and ≤ 2.0 ha	\$2,115
Municipal Drain Maintenance (DART Protocol) <u>Hydro One Maintenance</u>		\$100
Screening Fee & Written Advice & Letter of Authorization (ex. minor development in regulated area in approved subdivisions)		\$130
Permit Amendment with minor changes to proposal or site conditions		\$130
S. 28 Application Review Hearing		\$415
Major Projects (ex. Minister's Zoning Order, applications that include several technical studies, >500 m shoreline work or watercourse realignment, development or interference with >2 ha wetland, subdivisions over 10 lots, fill placement over > 2000 m ³ / > 2.0 ha) Note: Additional charges for legal or technical peer-review may be applicable.		\$5,695
Issuance of new permit with no changes to proposal or site conditions will be reduced by 50%		

Security Deposit	Minor	\$1,000 800
	Major	\$2,000 3,500
	Wetland Compensation project - \$12,350/ha	

Property Inquiry For written responses to legal, real estate and related financial (including CMHC) inquiries by landowners or others on their behalf for property inquiry letter; includes flood plain map (where applicable) and photocopy costs.	File Search Only (10 business days)	\$300
	Expedited Search (3 business days)	\$400
	With Site Inspection	\$515

Note:

- Permit Application fees where the only change in the original application is the time frame will be reduced by 50%.
- Project descriptions are only typical examples. MVCA reserves the right to determine the fee based on each individual project proposal, on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the Manager of Planning and [Regulations Stewardship](#).

MVCA Fee Schedule: 2026

Schedule "C" Fees

*3% increase to all fees over 2025 rates.

Technical Report Review

Technical reports are routinely prepared by qualified professionals in the fields of water resources engineering, hydro-geological investigation, site servicing, geotechnical engineering, environmental assessments, ecology and planning. Such experts are familiar with profession standards and provincial and local requirements in such matters.

Report Review (1 st Submission)	Development Type	Fee
Normal Review (20 business days)		
- Floodplain hydrology analysis	Development area <0.5 hectares	\$475
- Geotechnical Reports (unstable soils and slopes)	Development area 0.5 hectares - < 2 hectares	\$930
- Wetland hydrology impact analysis	Development area > 2 hectares - < 5 hectares	\$1,950
- Environment impact studies		
- Stormwater management		
- Grading and drainage plan		
- Hydrological assessment		
- Groundwater and terrain analysis		
- Headwater Drainage Feature Assessment	Development area > than 5 hectares	\$3,035
Major Projects		Hourly
Additional Reviews		Hourly

Aggregate Resources Act Application Reviews (Plus Schedule C fees, as applicable)	\$4,120
Written Technical Response to Inquiry (1 Letter with O. Reg 41/24 Map)	\$35

Note:

- Reviews are prepared by 'qualified professionals' in the fields of water resources engineering, groundwater science, site servicing, geotechnical engineering,

environmental assessments, floodproofing, ecology and planning to support appropriate development. Our reviews involve evaluation of whether the applicable guidelines and legislation have been appropriately addressed.

- Technical report review services are tracked per file on an hourly basis. Where reviews exceed the standard allocation review time, or require multiple submission and re-reviews, MVCA reserves the right to charge an hourly professional rate in addition to the initial fee.
- Major projects are those with a high level of concern about the local environment, complex ecological, ground water and surface water interactions and which may require MVCA staff attendance at multiple meetings with proponents, consultants or public meetings to satisfy regulatory requirements.



Education Plan 2026-2028

TO: The Chair and Members of the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Emma Higgins, Education Program Coordinator

REPORT: 3536/26, January 12, 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Directors approve the attached Education Plan 2026-2028.

1.0 BACKGROUND

Since the 1970's MVCA has provided quality outdoor education and experiences that foster a love for nature and stewardship. Since reinstatement of the education program in 2024, MVCA has seen increasing registrations and has made significant progress towards financial self-sufficiency. Over 3,000 registrants have participated in MVCA's program since being reinstated in 2024, with many returning clients. Moving forward, the goal is to become fully cost-recoverable and for the program to regain its reputation as a valued and trusted service within our watershed for years to come. The attached *Education Plan 2026 – 2028* reviews current state and sets program goals, objectives, and targets for the planning period.

2.0 2025 PROGRAM SUMMARY

2.1 Mandatory Educational Objectives/Mandate

MVCA's Education Program allows it to address mandatory public education objectives set out in the *Conservation Authorities Act*. Specifically, watershed and hazard-based learning objectives are delivered through several education programs.

Staff have made a significant effort to harmonize Ministry of Education curriculum and CA Act learning objectives and activities. As a result, analysis of our most popular seasonal activities indicates that on average 40% of total program time is spent addressing Category 1 learning outcomes.

2.2 Program Revenue & Participation

Education Program participation grew significantly between 2024 and 2025:

- School/Group program: increased by 2,400 participants.
- Day Camps participation: increased by 160 campers.
- Guided Hike: piloted in Fall 2025 with 17 participants.

An 85% increase in revenues is projected in 2025 over 2024 with projected 2025 self-generated revenues just under \$90,000 or 85% cost recovery. This greatly exceeds the average 60% of time expended on Category 3 programming.

The Education program has received \$9,000 in grants since being reinstated. This includes a \$3,000 grant from Ontario Power Generation that provided 15 school groups a bursary of \$200 each towards transportation costs to attend the Mill of Kintail CA.

2.3 Customer/Partner Feedback

MVCA conducted a series of surveys the past year and was consistently praised on the quality of its programs and participant experiences. Organizations such as the Upper Canada District Schoolboard ‘Real World Learning’ Program and the Canadian Mental Health Association have partnered over the past year with MVCA and we are continuing to build partnerships with local school and community organizations.

3.0 2026 OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are proposed for 2026:

- Increase media presence through implementation of a Marketing Strategy.
- Increase registrations and community connections through:
 - an expansion of program offerings (including new target markets),
 - an increase in partnerships (school boards and otherwise); and
 - an increase to participant registration targets.
- Continue to focus on marrying activities that are fun and adventurous with provincial curriculum that supports delivery of MVCA’s educational mandate regarding natural hazards, risk mitigation and resource sustainability.
- Increase grant applications to support program expenses and provide client subsidy support for transportation costs and program fees.
- Increase program accessibility through site-specific upgrades and with subsidized support.
- Maintain a reliable staffing pool through staff retention.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

The following corporate goals and objectives are supported through delivery of MVCA's Education Program:

Goal 3: Enhance Community Awareness & Education

- c. Enhance Category 1 education and outreach programming.
- d. Develop partnerships with targeted groups.

Goal 4: Plan for Long Term Viability

- a. Develop and assess options for sustainable program delivery.
- b. Partner with others to pool resources for mutual success.
- c. Develop business plans for Category 3 programs and services.

ATTACHMENTS

- Draft Education Plan 2026-2028
- 2024-2026 Education Services Finances



DRAFT Education Plan

2026-2028

January 2026



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ABBREVIATIONS

CA – Conservation Authority

MICA – Morris Island Conservation Area

RVCA – Rideau Valley Conservation Authority

MOKCA – Mill of Kintail Conservation Area

OEE – Outdoor and Environmental Education

MVCA – Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority

UCDSB – Upper Canada District Schoolboard

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MVCA began to offer outdoor education and experiences that foster an understanding and love for nature and stewardship in the 1970s. Since its reinstatement in 2024 (post the COVID-19 epidemic), MVCA has seen increasing registrations and bookings and made significant progress towards financial self-sufficiency. In 2024 and 2025, the program served over 3,000 participants, receiving highly positive feedback with many returning clients.

In 2024 the revenue stream for the program changed and the Board directed that the program work towards financial self-sufficiency. This Education Plan calls for implementation of a detailed marketing plan that includes an increase in grant writing, an expansion of program offerings, and an increase to participation targets and enhanced community engagement. The program will focus on marrying activities that are fun and adventurous with provincial curriculum that aligns with MVCA's educational mandate regarding natural hazards, risk mitigation and resource sustainability.

For decades, MVCA has been a trusted choice for outdoor education, which allowed us to share valuable messaging regarding our mandate. With a growing watershed population and increasing need to help people connect to nature, implementation of the Education Plan will put MVCA in a solid position to build community awareness, strike new partnerships, and achieve full cost recovery over time.



“In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”
Haudenosaunee Confederacy, (Iroquois Confederacy)

2.0 BACKGROUND

For decades, MVCA has been a guardian of the Mississippi, Carp, and Ottawa Watersheds, fostering a deep connection between people and nature. Our education program is a cornerstone of this mission, engaging thousands of students, educators, and families through hands-on learning, outdoor experiences, and curriculum-aligned activities. From stream studies and wetland explorations to climate change awareness and conservation leadership, we inspire the next generation to care for the natural world and enlighten the public to how they can safely enjoy the watershed around them.



Outdoor education program is successful after first year

The best kind of education doesn't necessarily take place in a classroom as the students at the Mill of Kintail have been demonstrating this winter.

Diana Carlile is the natural specialist who has been working for the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) since the program developed just this kind of approach to outdoor education.

And judging from the feed back she has been receiving from teachers and parents involved the program is a success.

Last week 23 Grade 4 students from the Parkway Public School travelled to the Mill to learn about natural animal tracks and animals in winter.

The students, who are members of Diana's class, were given a short briefing at the reception centre (a visitor centre converted to a classroom) and then set off on their tour.

They dressed warmly for the outing and carried rulers and workbooks to take measurements on the trail.

Enthusiastic

Diana was an enthusiastic guide whose love of the outdoors was contagious. She allowed the children to run free when they wanted, but was there to keep an eye on them.

The outdoor education program is not a new one at the Mill of Kintail - over 1000 students have already taken part in the program since it started nearly two years ago.

The strong program consists of a guided nature walk and a tour of the museum, while summer visitors were treated to talks on bird and flower identifications.

In the fall primary students explored

looked at more specific topics and senior students examined problems by themselves in finding food and shelter.

Diana is the first outdoor education specialist to be employed by MVCA and brings to the job, experience as a high school geography teacher and more than 10 years in environmental education.

She doesn't like to label herself an "outdoor education specialist" but appreciates the natural environment.

Activities

This is evident in the fact she enjoys many outdoor activities including cross-country skiing.

Books on wildlife so she can set up various programs for the students.

It became clear there are trials to keep

groomed, so Diana heads out with her students to keep the trails in good shape.

She says, "I like the job that's never dull, but it does have its ups and downs.

It's a good job, but there are times when she wonders what she's doing out in sub-zero weather."

For these discussions are the natural beauty of forest trails, though just for students, she says, "I like to go out with the students and show them what's around a trail marker last week, everything."

The most rewarding aspect of her job is the positive feedback from parents appreciating for the students, a process that can be a challenge.

Enriching job

Enriching job is an important part of her work but it comes naturally when you do what you love to do.

What comes to taking different school children out on the trails makes up for everything.

The most rewarding aspect of her job is the positive feedback from parents appreciating for the students, a process that can be a challenge.

Feeling tired

Students are asked to take out the bags

feathers and talk about why they have feathers.

"It's a feeling for the age group,

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suspended in 2020 due to the pandemic and associated operational and financial constraints, and was not reinstated until 2024.

The four-year hiatus was in part due to changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*.¹ A new funding model took effect January 2024 that defined much of the education program as a ‘Category 3’ service that would be required to self-generate greater revenues and operate within the limits of municipal funding agreements. Given revenue uncertainty, the program resumed in 2024 as a pilot project to assess program viability and the business case for long-term delivery of the program. Building on the success of 2024, in 2025 MVCA was able to offer a full year of education programming. Moving forward, the goal is to become fully cost-recoverable so that the program can regain its position as a valued and trusted program within our watershed for years to come.

4.0 EDUCATION AND MVCA’S PROVINCIAL MANDATE

*O. Reg. 686/21*² sets out the mandate of conservation authorities, which includes:

- Public awareness, education and outreach components related to the risk of natural hazards within the authority’s area of jurisdiction, including:
 - wetlands,
 - river or stream valleys,
 - areas that are adjacent to or close to the shoreline of...an inland lake and that may be affected by flooding, erosion or dynamic beach hazards, and
 - unstable soils or bedrock.
- Inform people regarding potential or actual impact of drought and low water events.
- Support public access and recreational activities in conservation areas.
- Programs and services to conserve, protect, rehabilitate, establish, and manage natural heritage located within the lands owned or controlled by the authority.

¹ Refer to MVCA Staff Report 3451/24 and Report prepared by consultant Bill Elgie on pages 127-191 of the October 21, 2024, Board of Directors Meeting. <https://mvc.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/24-10-16-BoD-Agenda-Package-Full-v1.pdf>

² <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/210686>

Policies governing the education program are set out in section 3.4 of MVCA's *Land Conservation and Resource Strategy, 2024*.³ The following educational matters and messages are to be addressed through the education program:

- rivers and dams are parts of a watershed
- watersheds have dynamic ecosystems and hydrological processes
- what we do on the land can alter those processes, and
- those changes can impact the safety and welfare of ourselves and others

4.1 Making the Category 1 Connection

MVCA's education program provides a large variety of outdoor lessons, activities, challenges and games. Some activities relate to curriculum targets and are enjoyed by most school groups and campers. Programs can be adapted by grade level. Table 1 below evaluates some of the more popular programs and indicates the percentage of time typically spent focused on Category 1 learning objectives.

Our Education Program allows the public to be directly educated on hazards and risks around the watershed whilst fostering a desire to sustain and care for wildlife.

As we continue to build trust within the community by delivering meaningful and high-quality programs, we become a partner of choice for education and community services.



³ [MVCA, Land Conservation & Resource Strategy, 2024.](#)

Table 1: MVCA Education Programs

Activity or Program	Key Learning Targets	Category 1 (% time/booking)	Category 3 (% time/booking)
Safety Brief – every outdoor program includes a safety orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water/ice/dams risks and hazards - Natural risks and hazards (ticks, bees, noxious plants) - Weather hazards - Boundaries for safe-play 	60%	40%
Key Programs (completed by majority of bookings, seasonally):			
Stream Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is a watershed? - Water health - Water safety - Human impacts - Biomonitoring - Habitats/Animals - Water conservation 	40%	60%
Water Rangers – Water Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is a watershed? - Water health - Water safety - Human impacts - Habitats/animals - Water testing: temp, PH, etc. - Water conservation 	50%	50%

Activity or Program	Key Learning Targets	Category 1 (% time/booking)	Category 3 (% time/booking)
Scavenger Hunts/ Nature ID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nature ID in Watersheds - Biodiversity - Seasonal changes - Safety: land and water - 'Leave no Trace' principles - Habitats/animals 	30%	70%
Snowshoeing/ Hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nature ID in Watersheds - Safety: forest and group awareness - Habitats/ animals - Seasonal changes - Biodiversity 	20%	80%
SWAP Program*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is a watershed? - Water risks and hazards - Dams, Culverts - Flooding hazards - Ice and cold-water awareness - Emergency response 	80%	20%
Additional Programs (not an exhaustive list):			
Animal Role-Play Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nature ID in Watersheds - Human Impacts - Food chains/Ecosystems 	20%	80%

Activity or Program	Key Learning Targets	Category 1 (% time/booking)	Category 3 (% time/booking)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Migration/Hibernation - Habitats/animals 		
Shelter-Building/ Survival Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survival skills - Natural risks and hazards - Emergency preparedness - Team building - Shelters, fire, orienteering... 	20%	80%
Nature Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Leave no trace' - Sustainability - Human Impacts 	20%	80%
Snow Science (Thermal Challenges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thermal properties - Seasonal changes - Habitats/winter animals - Cold safety/awareness 	30%	70%

** The SWAP presentation is completed indoors and does not require the outdoor safety brief, but the entirety of the activity is focused on safety and hazard awareness.*

All the percentages above are subject to change based on many factors – group age level, group experience level, seasonal changes.

5.0 EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This section reviews programs delivered as part of the pilot in 2024 through to the 2025 program year.

5.1 Day Camps

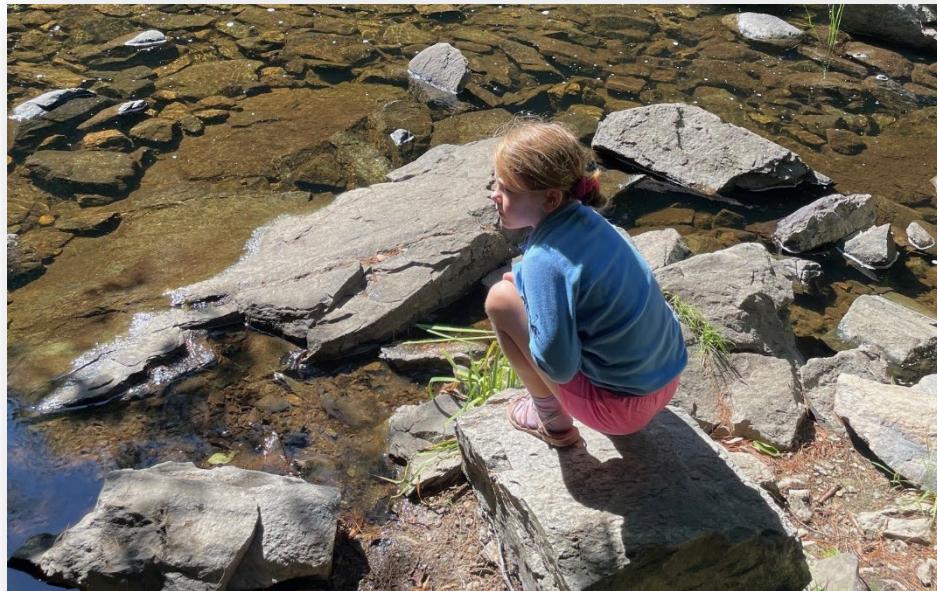
Day Camps held at the [Mill of Kintail Conservation Area](#) (MOKCA) are a cornerstone program and consist of the following:

- Summer Camp
- March Break Camp
- PA Day Camps

Day camps allow MVCA to achieve its education mandate while helping to instill an appreciation for nature in young minds.

Key Targets

- Deliver engaging, hands-on, and fun programming for ages 6-12.
- Deliver seasonally appropriate and adaptable programs.
- Meet conservation authority learning objectives regarding watersheds, water safety and resource conservation.
- Summer Camps generated 53% of 2025 program revenue.



5.2 School/Group Program

The Watershed Education Programs offers educators and local organizations outdoor learning opportunities. Teachers can choose from a variety of seasonal activities that support curriculum targets. Programs are primarily held at the MOKCA.

Key Targets:

- Education that is relevant (achieving learning goals), useful, and accessible for community schools or groups
- Programs that are high-quality, building trust and making MVCA a partner of choice for outdoor learning and experiential education
- Educate on MVCA mandates, watersheds, and outdoor safety

5.3 Guided Tours

Our guided tours and walks offer an opportunity for community members to engage with our wild spaces, learn the history of our Conservation Area's while enjoying socialization. These tours are open for public members or can be offered as part of a private group booking. Programs for 2025 have been available at the MOKCA.

Mood Walks Partnership (2025-2026): In 2025, MVCA partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association to host 'Mood Walks' that are open for to seniors' groups and the general public as part of a mental wellness initiative.

Key Targets:

- Create focused programs that target the various C.A locations and include engaging information on history, MVCA roles, nature, and more
- Deliver programs that support networking, enjoyment, and community engagement
- Welcome all ages and utilize accessible areas
- Educate on MVCA mandates, watersheds, and outdoor safety

The following table summarizes 2024-2025 bookings and illustrates program growth since relaunching post the pandemic.

2024-2025 Bookings

School and Groups	2024	2025
Full Day Bookings	2	12
Half Day Bookings	2	16
Custom/Presentations	0	6
Total Bookings	4	34
Total Participants	90	2500
Camps	2024	2025
Summer Camp	128	228
March Break Camp	0	28
PA Day Camps (2 sessions)	0	31
Total Participants	128	287
Guided Tours (Mood Walks)	2024	2025
Total Participants	0	17

5.4 Customer Satisfaction

Surveys were issued to Program Clients (teachers, parents/guardians) upon major program completion, in the hopes of receiving immediate program feedback.

The following is a summary of survey results where respondents rated their experience from: 0 – Unsatisfactory, 50 – Good, 100 – Amazing.

Summer Outdoor Adventure Camp 2025

- Overall camper experience rated at 95/100
- Overall Parent/Guardian experience rated at 93/100

- For future programs, all respondents are interested in more summer camps, and 75% are interested in seasonal camps
- Favorite Activities: exploration, stream study and water time

March Break “Slide into Adventure” Camp 2025

- Overall camper experience rated at 94/100
- Overall Parent/Guardian experience rated at 94/100
- Favorite Activities: fire starting, shelters, snowshoeing

Watershed Education 2025 – School Groups

- For future programs, all respondents are interested in more school group programs, with 67% interested in the warmer seasons, and 33% open to all-season (winter) sessions
- Highlights: stream study, organization and program planning skills, Staff (clients complimented staff facilitation skills)

A selection of parent/teacher quotes and feedback:

“Everything was great! The students of course loved the stream study part. We very much appreciated Emma’s energy, delivery and knowledge. She monitored the group’s energy and adjusted as needed. Emma made the day a huge success! Students enjoyed the field games especially too.” – Teacher, Fall 2025

“(My campers) Loved the water, play structure, catching minnows, how the staff made kids feel included...” – Parent, Summer Camp 2025

“They (the campers) just loved everything and begged to go back/sleep over!” – Parent, March Break Camp 2025

“Our kids enjoyed the camp very much, communication was great, staff was friendly and fun to be around for the kids! We will be back for a summer camp!” – Parent, March Break Camp 2025

“Very well-organized sessions.” – Teacher, Spring 2025

“We loved it and will be back!” Parent, Summer Camp 2025

6.0 REVENUES

Based upon bookings, 2025 showed an 85% revenue increase over the 2024 program year.

Category 3: Education Services

Expenditures	2024 Actuals	2025 Projection
Program Admin	\$56,154	\$43,340
Direct Program Staff		\$49,160
Mileage & General Expenses	\$1,210	\$3,550
Materials & Supplies	\$3,675	\$5,800
Publicity	\$1,038	\$3,875
Total	62,077	\$105,725
Revenues	2024 Actuals	2025 Projection
Municipal Levy - Category 3	13,735	\$16,494
Reserve Funds	\$11,007	
Provincial and Federal Grants	-	-
Summer Student Job Grants		\$0
Fees for Service	32,335	80,231
Camp Fees	\$32,335	\$68,024
Guided Tours		\$160
Programs		\$12,047
Other Revenue	5,000	9,000
Grants		\$9,000
Total	62,077	105,725

6.1 Grants and Partnerships

In addition to the \$20,000 Category 3 funding received from members municipalities, MVCA secured \$9,000 in grants that was used to:

- Provide 15 transportation subsidies of \$200 each for local schools
- Support equipment purchasing (e.g. new snowshoes)

MVCA also renewed its relationship with Ontario Power Generation, receiving grants through their 'Power for Change' Projects for 2025 and 2026 grant cycles. The following table lists recent and future partnerships. See Appendix A for grant details.

Organization	Nature of Partnership	Year
UCDSB: 'Real World Learning' Program	We provide hands-on learning experiences for students in the outdoors (see photo below)	2025
MBC Media	Provides MVCA a highly discounted rate for radio media promotions	2025
Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Center	Provides MVCA discounted rates for educational workshops for children	2025
Care Bridge Community Support (senior services)	Promotes our events to their clients based on a donation-based partnership – multiple Spring 2026 dates booked for guided tours	2025
Mood Walks (CMHA)	Provides promotion, administrative support, media support and program planning guidance as a partner for the 2025 Mood Walks (mental wellness) program	2025
Trellis Mental Health	In the process of building a partnered wellness retreat program at MOKCA	2026
Lanark Interval House	<i>New partnership in progress</i>	2026

Photo: R. Tait Mackenzie students built a mindfulness nature garden out of native grass species as part of the UCDSB: Real World Learning project.



7.0 MARKET COMPARISONS

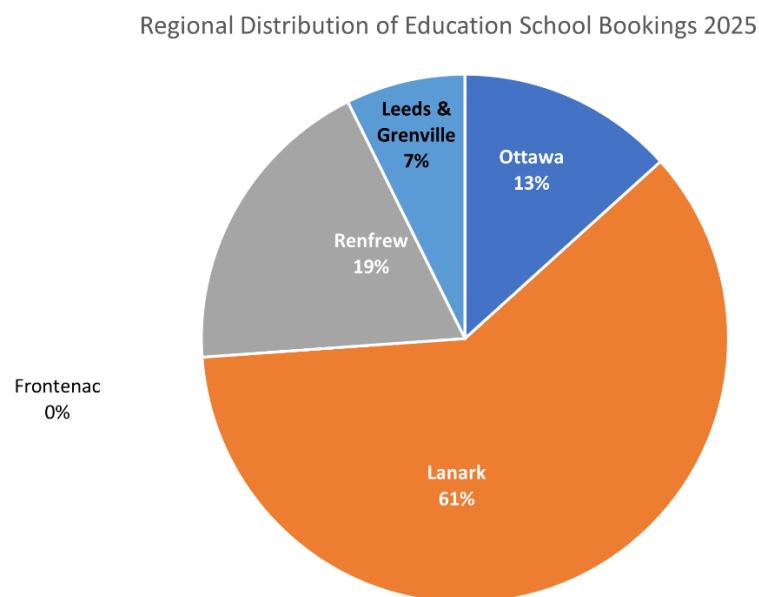
MVCA carried out a comparison of other local service providers to help determine its competitiveness in the marketplace.

7.1 Watershed Education

MVCA offers very similar programs to other conservation authorities such as the Rideau Valley CA as well as to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board at its Bill Mason Centre in West Carleton (refer to Appendix B for details.) Both organizations were able to reinstate programming and reestablish relationships with school principals and teachers sooner than MVCA. Therefore, that puts them at an advantage to attracting bookings. However, there is only so far that school groups are willing to travel; and the Bill Mason Centre is known to book up quickly.

Consequently, MVCA has focused its promotional efforts in west Ottawa, Arnprior, and schools in the northern area of Lanark County. The following table shows school board participation rates in MVCA's programs that help illustrate market conditions and opportunities.

Transport, generally, is a constraint to schools wanting to participate in any off-site activity, which is why an emphasis has been placed on securing grants that help offset those costs.



7.2 Day Camps

A comparison of MVCA's program to those of other local service providers found that many day camps are run out of municipal recreational facilities and parks (see Appendix C for details.) By comparison, MVCA offers a 'wilderness' experience at the MOKCA and nature-focused activities. However, as with educational programming, some organizations were able to reinstate programming during the pandemic and have the advantage of greater business continuity and community awareness. As well, the MOKCA remote's location is a practical constraint. In short, there is an upset participation rate that MVCA can expect based upon population and travel that will be further impacted by cycles in community demographics. For this reason, competitive pricing and realistic enrollment rates are critical for delivery of this program.

8.0 SWOB ANALYSIS

The following is a summary analysis of the current program, which will help to inform future program design and delivery.

Strengths

- High-quality program experiences (quality facilitation)
- Excellent client feedback
- Building new partnerships
- Adaptable programs
- Working in a positive direction toward financial targets
- Achieving Watershed Education booking targets
- Unique and beautiful outdoor program locations

Weakness

- Staff retention (many staff leave for post-secondary or career work)
- Achieve PA-Day camp registration targets

Opportunities

- Improve accessibility
- Improve registration systems (efficiency, professionalism)
- Increase presence through marketing and partnerships
- Increase registrations (program revenue)
- Provide program opportunities at other MVCA conservation areas
- Expand to include untapped markets – adults, seniors, home schools...
- Continue to build trust within the community
- Develop a bursary program for program fees and transportation costs
- Continue to reduce load on Category 3 financial support

Barriers

- Site Limitations – group capacity limits (parking, sheltered space for large groups)
- Low-income families may have difficulty with program costs
- Transportation – bussing (expensive and not readily available) affecting school group visitation
- Long-term planning can be difficult with changes to the C.A structure

- Competition of other Education, Camp, and Recreation programs

9.0 DRAFT PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 2026-2028

The following table lists program goals and objectives for the next three years.

Year	Goals	Objectives
2026	Improve Education Program accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize MOKCA updates (ramp on Ed. Center) • Analyze site possibilities and accessibility upgrades • Apply to grants that support a specific accessibility project
	Increase media presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the <i>Marketing Strategy 2025 (Appendix D)</i> • Attend local events and networking socials
	Increase Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build meaningful partnerships as mentioned in the <i>Marketing Strategy 2026 (Appendix D)</i>, prioritizing connections with school boards
	Increase Registrations and Meet Targets (Key focus: PA camps, summer camps)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the 'Marketing Strategy' with a key focus on day camps above other programming • Build on returning clients and community trust by ensuring programs continue to run with high-quality • Build mailing lists and subscribers with each program
	Seek funding to achieve bursary programs/ long-term funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply to 1-2 grants per season with this focus • Continue sending Letters of Interest through Grant Advance programs • Consider Grant working groups/ grant writing courses
	Staff retention and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek staff continuously to build a 'Casual Pool' that is available year-round instead of hiring ahead of each camp date (Casual contracts do not offer minimum or maximum hours, they are flexible) • Consider hiring more staff with shorter shifts for summer camps to maintain energy and staff morale

2027	Streamline Registration systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and locate a cost-effective camp registration system once we have a better understanding of annual registration numbers This will in turn improve efficiency, reducing a large administrative load and creating time for more marketing and program planning
	Continue to build trust within community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By supplying high-quality programs, a customer base will be built and will continue positively influencing program registrations Adjust and follow an updated marketing strategy focused on community engagement
	Increase program offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase PA camps, guided tour offerings, and school group bookings per year Increase attendance sizes as possible with location capacity limits Offer programs at other C. A's
	Adjust annual budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual budget to be adjusted based on 2026 numbers
	Continue to reduce load on Category 3 financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased programs and registrations with improved program efficiency will increase revenue
	Achieve full cost-recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust budgets and goals each year to achieve this target

10.0 FINANCIAL PLANNING 2026

The following enrollment targets were used to draft the 2026 Budget.

Summer Camp	7 Weeks, 44 campers Total: 308
March Break Camp	1 Week, 32 campers
PA Day Camp	3 Dates, 15 campers Total: 45 campers
Guided Tours	5 Sessions, 15 participants Total: 75 participants
Watershed Education Bookings	40 Sessions (20 full day, 10 half day, 10 custom)

On this basis, MVCA projects a reduced Municipal Category 3 Levy in 2026.

Expenditures	2025 Projection	2026 Budget
Program Admin	\$43,340	43,505
Direct Program Staff	\$49,160	54,298
Mileage & General Expenses	\$3,550	3,188
Materials & Supplies	\$5,800	6,300
Publicity	\$3,875	4,000
Total	\$105,725	111,291
Revenues	2025 Projection	2026 Budget
Municipal Levy - Category 3	\$16,494	7,971
Reserve Funds		
Provincial and Federal Grants	-	-
Summer Student Job Grants	\$0	
Fees for Service	80,231	99,320
Camp Fees	\$68,024	84,820
Guided Tours	\$160	1,500
Programs	\$12,047	13,000
Other Revenue	9,000	4,000
Grants	\$9,000	4,000
Total	105,725	111,291

11.0 MEASURING SUCCESS

Short Term

By achieving the annual targets, and remaining focused on the goals, the Education Department can continue to grow. Each year, it will become evident which opportunities need to be addressed, and the Plan of Action can be adjusted. Across each year, the following targets will always be present:

- **Increase program registrations (add target markets, increase bookings)**
- **Increase program reach and community engagement (marketing, partnerships)**

Long Term

As the Program becomes more established and there is a focus on enrollment growth and program offerings, future years will see the burden be lessened, year-to-year, on the Category 3 budget line. The goal is to have the Program be completely cost recoverable by end of the 4th year (Year-end 2028).

With the Education program achieving cost recovery, it can continue to be an important part of the MVCA services, achieving long-term board directives whilst instilling a love and passion for outdoor spaces in young minds and community members.



APPENDICES

A. Funding Requests

Organization	Status	Cycle
Ontario Power Generation (2024)	Approved: \$5000.00 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$3000.00 distributed as a transportation subsidy - \$2000.00 program equipment 	2024 - 2025
Ontario Power Generation (2025)	Approved: \$4000.00 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$2000.00 Program Equipment (generic) - \$2000.00 for Snowshoe Inventory 	2025 - 2026
F.K Morrow Foundation	<i>Requested \$20,000.00 in support of Transportation and Program Fee subsidies for public members</i>	<i>Pending</i>

B. RVCA – Market Comparison Table

The analysis below is between MVCA and the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) 2025 programs.

MVCA Education Programs 2025		RVCA Education Programs 2025	
Camp Programs			
Program	Fees	Program	Fees
Summer Camp (max. 40 participants)	\$260.00 /week	Summer Camp (max. 24 participants)	\$250.00/week
PA Day Camp	\$50.00 /day	PA Day Camp	\$60.00/day
March Break Camp	\$225.00/ week		
School Education (and Visitation) Programs			
Program	Fees	Program	Fees
Full Day (4.5 hours) (Max 40 participants, else additional fees apply)	\$450.00/ session	Full Day (3 hours) (Max 30 participants)	\$300.00/ session
Half Day (2 hours)	\$260.00/ session	Half Day (90 min.)	\$220.00/ session
Custom/ Site Visit	\$80.00/ hourly		
Bus Fee	\$3.00/ per person	Self-Directed Fee	\$2.50/ per person

C. Summer Day Camps – Market Comparison

Does not include additional fees such as late pickup or early drop off.

Organization	Day Camp Name	Weekly Fees 2025	Staff Ratio	Ages
MVCA	Outdoor Adventure Day Camps	260.00	8:1	6-12
5 Star Camps	5-Star Outdoor Adventure Camp	499.00 Lunch included	6:1	5-12
Beckwith Township, Recreation Department	Beckwith Summer Camp	205.00	7:1	4-12
Town of Renfrew	Summer Day Camp	200.00 Non-Residents pay added fees	--	5-11
Base Camp Sports, Carleton Place	Base Camp Sports	265.00	--	6-12
City of Ottawa	Ottawa Adventure Camp	250.00 2024, 2025 fees closed	--	6-10
Camps Canada, Kanata	Multisport Camp	395.00	8:1	5-12
Town of Arnprior	Camp Wanna-Go	337.00	--	4-10
RVCA	Outdoor Adventurers	250.00	8:1	6-12

D. Marketing Strategy 2026

Content Marketing <i>Print</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue placing posters in areas highly used by families and educators Seek new locations and expand on reach in more remote areas Establish community trust and develop more relationships that allow for posters to be placed in private business' / promoted at third party locations
<i>Online</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage community calendars and free online services Use Square platform to be more visible in search engines
Social Media Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase social media posting (Instagram, Facebook) Collect high-quality photos, videos, and highlights Utilize more videos when posting, as that increases viewership on social media platforms Release registration dates sooner across all media platforms for all camps (2-weeks earlier than 2025)
Radio Commercials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the Radio partnership with MBC media to release monthly commercials
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build partners that promote Education materials to their networks (Example: Care Bridge) Strengthen partnerships with school boards
Mailing Lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue building and expanding on mailing lists and subscription lists to send seasonal newsletters and registration invitations
Events and In-Person Promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase networking events attended (such as the Mississippi Mills business lunches) Cross-promote at other MVCA Department events Increase booth event attendance (there are free community registration nights in Almonte, as one example) Host booths at the MOKCA during peak seasons

Category 3: Education Services

Expenditures	2024 Actuals	2025 Projection	2026 Budget
Program Admin	\$56,154	\$43,340	43,505
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By-law Amendment re: Abstentions

TO: The Chair and Members of the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Sally McIntyre, General Manager

REPORT: 3537/26, January 7, 2026.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Directors approve amendment of MVCA's Administrative By-law to address how Abstentions shall be handled during voting as set out in this report.

During a recent Committee meeting, a member abstained from voting, and it became evident that municipalities represented at the table handle abstentions differently, and there was no language in MVCA's by-laws that addressed the matter. The purpose of this report is to propose amendment to *MVCA's Administrative By-law* to provide direction on this and related matters.

1.0 BACKGROUND

Robert's Rules of Order 12th edition states the following:

- “Although it is the duty of every member who has an opinion on a question to express it by their vote, they can abstain, since they cannot be compelled to vote.” (45:3)
- “To abstain is to not vote at all” (4:35), neither for nor against.
- “The Chair does not call for abstentions in taking a vote since the number of members who respond to such a call is meaningless.” (4:35)
- Where a minimum percentage of members present must approve the vote (50%, 2/3rds...) “an abstention in such cases has the same effect as a negative vote” if the minimum percentage is not achieved and denies “members the right to maintain a neutral position by abstaining.” (44:9)
- “For the same reason, members present who fail to vote through indifference rather than through deliberate neutrality may affect the result negatively.” (44:9)

- “No member should vote on a question in which he has a direct personal or pecuniary interest not common to other members of the organization.” This “does not mean that a member should not vote for themselves for an office or other position to which members generally are eligible.” (45:4 and 45:5)
- “A member has the right to change their vote up to the time the result is announced but afterwards can make the change only by the unanimous consent of the assembly requested and granted without debate, immediately following the chair’s announcement of the result of the vote.” (45:8)

Based upon the above, it is concluded that:

- Board members have the right to abstain.
- Abstentions only matter when the minimum number of votes required to carry a motion is not achieved as they have the same effect as a negative vote by showing a lack of willingness to support the motion.
- Someone has the right to change their vote before the Chair announces the result of the vote.
- Someone has the right to change their vote immediately following announcement of the vote only if the members present unanimously consent to allow such.

2.0 RECOMMENDED AMENDMENT

The following additions are recommended to Section 15: Voting of MVCA’s *Administrative By-law*, as shown in Attachment 1.

Members are entitled to abstain from voting. Abstentions shall be considered as lack of support for the motion.

A member may change their vote:

- *anytime before announcement of the result by the Chair.*
- *immediately following announcement of the result by the Chair if a request to change a vote is unanimously agreed upon by the members in attendance.*

ATTACHMENT

- Excerpt from MVCA *Administrative By-law* Section 15: Voting.

Attachment 1: Recommended By-law Amendment re: Abstentions

C) 15. Voting

In accordance with Section 16 of the Act:

- Each Member including the Chair is entitled to one vote,
- and
- a majority vote of the Members present at any meeting is required upon all matters coming before the meeting.

Where a member has been appointed by the Minister as a representative of the agricultural sector, the member shall not vote on the following resolutions:

- to enlarge an authority's area of jurisdiction;
- to amalgamate the Authority with another conservation authority;
- to dissolve the Authority; and
- on any budgetary matter.

On a tie vote, the motion is lost.

Members are entitled to abstain from voting. Abstention shall be considered as lack of support for the motion.

A member may change their vote:

- **anytime before announcement of the result by the Chair.**
- **immediately following announcement of the result by the Chair if a request to change a vote is unanimously agreed upon by the members in attendance.**

Interrelated motions shall be voted on in the order specified in Roberts Rules of Order.

Unless a Member requests a recorded vote, a vote shall be by a show of hands or such other means as the Chair may call. No question shall be voted upon more than once at any meeting, unless a recorded vote is requested.

If a Member present at a meeting at the time of the vote requests immediately before or after the taking of the vote that the vote be recorded, each member present recorded by alphabetical surname with the Chair voting last, except a member who is disqualified from voting by any Act, shall announce his or her vote openly answering "yes" or "no" to the question, and the Secretary-Treasurer shall record each member name and vote which shall be included in the minutes of the meeting.

At the meeting of the Authority at which the Non-Matching Levy is to be approved, the Secretary-Treasurer shall conduct the vote to approve of Non-Matching Levy by a Weighted Majority of the Members present and eligible to vote, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 139/96.

Where a question under consideration contains more than one item, upon the request of any Member, a vote upon each item shall be taken separately.

Except as provided in Section C, Paragraph 6 of this By-law (Election of Chair and Vice-Chair), no vote shall be taken by ballot or by any other method of secret voting, and every vote so taken is of no effect.

Voting by Proxy is prohibited except by resolution of the General Membership. The resolution must deal with no more than one agenda item and be adopted a minimum of 5 working days in advance of the scheduled vote. Once the resolution is carried, Members wishing to vote by proxy shall provide the Secretary-Treasurer with the following information a minimum of 24 hours before the scheduled vote:

- the agenda item to which the proxy vote is assigned
- the meeting and date on which the agenda item will be considered
- the name of the Member assigned the proxy vote, and
- written acceptance by the Member to exercise the proxy vote

The Secretary-Treasurer shall notify the General Membership of proxy votes during Roll Call.

A Member exercising a proxy vote shall be entitled to vote on all motions considered under the agenda item specified by the Member voting by proxy.

An absent member voting by proxy shall not be considered “present” during meeting Roll Call and will not be included in the calculation of Quorum.

A member will exercise no more than one (1) proxy vote per agenda item.