

COMMENTS BY CATHY REDDEN
PRESENTED TO
STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
DECEMBER 1, 2020

Good Morning All

My name is Catherine ReddenAs Chairperson of the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority I welcome the opportunity to bring comments in response to the proposed amendments to the **Conservation Authorities Act....Schedule 6, Bill 229**

I am also a Councillor in the Municipality of Trent Hills and bring greetings from our Council and Mayor Bob Crate.

Trent Hills is a small rural municipality nestled in the north east corner of Northumberland County straddling the historic Trent River. It is made up of the villages of Warkworth and Hastings, and the Town of Campbellfordsurrounded by some of the best agricultural land in Ontario.

I want to begin my remarks by recognizing that there has never been a year like this one in terms of the challenges faced by the local businesses, industries and services in Trent Hills....much like those faced by similar communities across the Province.

This is definitely a time for all levels of government to be working together to develop and implement well thought out plans that will result in the realization of a strong, long term economic recovery for the citizens that we represent.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to participate in this effort.

As mentioned earlier, I chair the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority...a small rural authority situated 2 hours north east of the GTA, 50 minutes from Peterborough and 45 minutes from Quinte West and Belleville.

This watershed is covered with countless wetlands, natural riverbank corridors and forests. About 85% of its 2006 square kilometers are covered by the rugged terrain of the Canadian Shield. The remaining 15% is blanketed by rolling farmlands and limestone regions lying south of Highway #7 with a few small villages and towns dotting the landscape.

This Authority is small from a financial perspective and operates with a bare bones budget.

There is virtually no funding allocated to non-core programming at the CVCA...in fact the per capita levy (operating + capital) is approximately \$69 per person while the provincial average is approximately \$10 to \$15.

This has literally created a two tier system, causing small rural authorities with limited resources to place tremendous pressure on their rural municipalities for needed financial support.

Our services and programs are delivered in an effective and efficient manner by seven staff and one manager. There are no additional support staff such as engineers, biologists, and GIS technicians or communications staff. Instead we have created an informal network of shared services with other authorities that we rely upon to create some of our efficiencies.

The Crowe is one of the few CAs operating water control structures. WE have 15 located across the watershed for multiple purposes, including flood mitigation.

I would like to point out that all current staff...including the office secretary are trained as dam operators and can perform those hands on duties when required!

Our member municipalities have recognized that the value of the programs and services that we deliver are essential for the area. In turn, the Authority is able to provide them with planning and technical advice which assists them in fulfilling their own land use planning responsibilities.

So why am I here today? Primarily it is to ensure that the voice of a very small, rural conservation authority is heard...

You are likely aware of the flurry of communications that have been received from Conservation Authorities across Ontario. There is no doubt that many of the proposed amendments will make significant change to the way they currently operate
....particularly to the larger ones.

At this point I should make it known that my Board has endorsed repealing Section 6, to allow for further consultation and study.

There is concern that the number of changes introduced have the potential to decrease the ability of the board to manage its roles and responsibilities effectively. We want to ensure that they are positive steps forward without unintended consequences.

We had hoped that any amendments to the Act would improve and continue to honour the Province's long-standing partnership with conservation authorities and provide us with the additional necessary tools and financial resources we need to effectively implement our watershed management role.

We do recognize however....that the Provincial government has many financial challenges of its own and this Budget must be dealt with in a timely manner.

We support the stated objectives of the Province to modernize the Conservation Authorities Act.and participated in consultations with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks last November and the roundtables in February.

We were heartened by **Ontario's Flooding Strategy** released earlier this year that suggested this government was prepared to address the longstanding need for updated mapping and technical guidelines.

Having these important tools available will assist in providing streamlined and consistent decision-making..... keep people and property out of high-risk areas as well as not aggravating or creating new flood risks

Despite limited resources we strive to ensure that our current permitting process is timely, provides for necessary consultation and allows requested development as much as possible.

Our staff make every effort to ensure that natural hazards, and heritage and water features will not be negatively affected by proposed development..... At the same time, they work to ensure that the completed project itself will not be impacted by hazards, including flooding.

Decisions are based on careful review, considering each individual set of circumstances in order to make the right choices for the applicant as well as for the management of the watershed.

The Crowe Valley has always promoted the right development in the appropriate location to minimize loss of life, and property while balancing the development needs of a small rural community.

Since 2017 we have processed 917 permits with 8 Board hearings and only one of them resulting in a denial. Typically...if and when there is a hearing, compromise is the end result.

It was our sincere hope that the proposed permit process amendments would assist in reducing red tape and create additional conditions for growth.

We are more than willing to implement revised changes to the CA Act after further consultation which will aid in the overall improvement of what we currently believe is a good permitting process. It's the goal of the CVCA to balance the needs of the environment with the requirements of watershed residents and visitors.

As a small authority Crowe Valley Conservation can provide many "on the ground lessons" to assist in finding workable solutions for the challenges that lie ahead.

Please feel free to consult us at any time.

And thank you once again for the opportunity to address you today.