

Full Authority
16 May 2019
Agenda Item: 10

Client Service Standards for Conservation Authority Plan and Permit Review

CO Client Service and Streamlining Initiative

A number of concerns from the building sector in particular have been raised about conservation authorities' role in supporting the Province's priority of increasing housing supply (particularly in current and proposed high growth areas) and the CA core mandate.

It is important that conservation authorities participate in this conversation about our role in land use planning and approvals, and that we also help to clarify our mandate. As such, a Conservation Ontario Client Service and Streamlining Initiative is being developed and implemented. Conservation Ontario (the umbrella organization to assist, lobby, interact and develop policies/positions for all 36 conservation authorities in Ontario) is seeking support from all conservation authorities for the following three proposed solutions: a) Improve Client Service and Accountability, b) Increase Speed of Approvals, and c) Reduce Red Tape and Regulatory Burden while supporting the provincial government's objective not to jeopardize public health and safety or the environment in the process.

Therefore, individual CA resolutions in support of the three solutions identified are also requested as per a resolution passed at Conservation Ontario.

In addition, to deliver on these solutions, a CO General Manager Client Service and Streamlining Initiative Steering Committee membership has been struck and endorsed by Conservation Ontario. Given time constraints and the urgency to be proactive, the CO GM working group has drafted a proposed CO Client Service and Streamlining Initiative that includes specific actions regarding the above noted three solutions.

This has been done in order to best position conservation authorities to address the challenges ahead and to assist the government with achieving their aim of increasing housing supply in Ontario. Conservation Ontario has been advised that working within the government framework will be more effective than attempting to consult or discuss with a government that has shown little or no interest in these processes.

In essence, many conservation authorities have a successful track record and we can build upon these for consistency across the Province. For example, the CVCA has an excellent record of efficiency in delivering the Regulations program and focusing on our core mandate watershed based program to protect people and property from flooding and other natural hazards, and to conserve natural resources for economic, social and environmental benefits.

Conservation authorities propose to work with the development and construction community and municipalities on these activities as well as to identify and address any other specific concerns, including:

1. Improve Client Service and Accountability

a) Provide training and develop CA best-practices and disseminate this information through training and creation of guidelines for all CAs. Immediate activities include: i. Ongoing Client Service Delivery training/workshop(s) ii. Template for Client Service Standards Commitment/Policy for Development Projects iii. CA/municipal MOU framework for Planning/Development Approvals - technical services for plan review including municipal deadlines to support tracking/reporting iv. Methodology for establishing fee structure; including eligible costs for cost recovery v. Template for CA planning comments

b) Implement a consistent client-centric CA review and approval process checklist that provides transparency of process and rules. The checklist is to be completed and publicly accessible by August for CA jurisdictions with high growth areas. The checklist is proposed to include: i. Having publicly accessible agreements and policies that guide reviews and decision making, including: i. CA/Municipal MOUs or Technical Service Agreements ii. CA plan review and regulation approvals policies/guidelines iii. CA Complete application requirements iv. CA Fee policies and schedules v. CA Client Service Standards Commitment/Policy (including for example, timelines and identification of a senior CA staff contact serving as a 'client service facilitator' for plan review and/or permit applications issue management).

2. Increase Speed of Approvals

a) Undertake representative process flow review [Plans of Subdivision initially and Site Plan Control (Condominiums) at a later date] to understand bottlenecks in the review and approval process by working with the development community (OHBA, ResCon, BILD) and municipalities (AMO). b) Review timelines and feedback lessons learned from 2a) into improving client service and accountability

3. Reduce Red tape and Regulatory Burden

Review (and recommend as appropriate) candidate legislative amendment opportunities, including:

a) Repeal O.Reg 205/18 under the Safe Drinking Water Act and amend O. Reg. 287/07 under the Clean Water Act b) Align the CAA Section 28 permit approval timeframes with the proportional level of risk associated with the hazard and legislate the decision timelines for complete applications

Proposed CA Board Resolution

WHEREAS the provincial government intends to increase the supply of housing and streamline the land use planning and development approval process to achieve this goal; and

WHEREAS the Conservation Authorities play an important role in the planning and development review process with respect to watershed protection and hazard lands; and

WHEREAS Conservation Authorities support and can help deliver the Government's objective not to jeopardize public health and safety or the environment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors endorse the three key solutions developed by the Conservation Ontario working group: to improve client service and accountability; increase speed of approvals; and, reduce "red tape" and regulatory burden; and

THAT staff be directed to work with Conservation Ontario to identify additional improvements and best management practices; and further

THAT staff be directed to implement these solutions as soon as possible when resources are available.

Supplementary Comment

Although the initiative is to make improvements across the Province, in essence, many conservation authorities have a successful track record. The CVCA has an excellent record of efficiency in delivering the Regulations program and focusing on our core mandate watershed based program to protect people and property from flooding and other natural hazards, and to conserve natural resources for economic, social and environmental benefits. As a result, I firmly believe the CVCA has already consistently met or exceeded Provincial averages established within the 2010 MNRF policy document.

However, staff are committed to working with Conservation Ontario on developing and implementing any further best management practices identified.

Staff Recommendation

That the above proposed CA Board Resolution be adopted by the CVCA Board to show support for Conservation Ontario's streamlining initiative.

