

**Full Authority**  
**16 September 2021**  
**Agenda Item: 11**

**Transition Plan**

**Background**

**CA Act - Consultation Guide Regulation**

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On November 5, 2020, the Ontario government introduced a number of changes to the Conservation Authorities Act (the "Act") that will significantly impact the role of conservation authorities when it comes to issuing and appealing permits. These changes were introduced as Schedule 6 to the omnibus bill titled Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020 ("Bill 229"), and has received Royal Assent on December 8, 2020 becoming law in Ontario.

The Province released the Regulatory Proposal Guide on the 13 of May 2021 which they are using to consult with stakeholders and the public on the first phase of a series of the proposed regulations. The CVCA submitted comments to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) outlining 12 suggestions for the Ministry's consideration to change the guide to assist small rural conservation authorities. A copy of the submission was circulated to the Board.

At virtually the same time, a Cabinet shuffle resulted the appointment of Northumberland MPP David Piccini to the MECP portfolio. Through various contacts, Minister Piccini is becoming more familiar with the issues facing conservation authorities in general and in particular rural authorities in his area. Therefore, there is still possible changes to the Consultation Guide in the very near future, as the final version has yet to be circulated.

However, even though there could be some changes to the Guide, the deadlines will likely remain the same.

As a reminder, MECP has identified a number of action items to make the changes to the Conservation Authorities Act come to fruition. For all authorities, the first step in the transition phase is to create a transition plan with an inventory of programs and services available for each CA's respective municipalities. This will then determine the MOU agreements to be required and hence build in to the conservation authorities' budgets.

This Transition Plan is required to be submitted to MECP and made available to the public by 31 December 2021.

Conservation Ontario has created a guidance document to be used by conservation authorities. While this document will be very useful moving forward, MECP has also recognized there are differences amongst CAs in the capacity to create a Transition Plan and the suite of programs and services to be delivered across the Province.

Therefore, CVCA staff will tailor the Transition Plan to meet the needs of our member municipalities and emphasize our programs and services, which are not nearly as expansive as our neighbouring CAs and the vast majority across the Province.

Since our programs and services are primarily mandatory, CVCA staff are confident the Transition Plan will be straightforward. In addition, the CVCA's budgetary process has for a number of years separated the mandatory and non-mandatory services and programs. Therefore, there should be very little disruption to the budgetary process for the CVCA and our member municipalities.

The framework of the Transition Plan will generally include the following:

1. The Plan will outline the steps the CVCA will take to develop and enter into agreements with its member municipalities.
2. The CVCA will confirm municipal staff leads/contacts for any preliminary discussion on the details of the inventory.
3. CVCA will provide background information for municipal review.
4. A consultation process will be conducted with our municipalities on the inventory of all the CVCA's programs and services.
  - a. A brief description of the programs and services will be included
5. CVCA will provide steps to enter into any agreements with participating municipalities for funding of non-mandatory programs and services.
6. CVCA will deliver a report to Councils as and be available for further discussion and clarification of steps.
7. CVCA will be available to discuss questions, concerns or issues municipal staff could bring forward after Council review.
8. Transition Plans will be made available to the public through the CVCA's website with links requested on Municipal websites.

The Transition Plan is a CVCA Board approved document that is being circulated "for your information", not approval by the member municipalities.

Once all municipalities have a firm understanding of the CVCA's programs and services, it will provide the basis to enter into agreements where municipal levy is required to fund non-mandatory programs and services. As mentioned, the CVCA already conducts its budget process on this premise and the CVCA is limited in what it can currently offer its member municipalities.

In addition to the template from Conservation Ontario, conservation authorities from Eastern Ontario are sharing the development of a Transition Plan. It should allow for as much consistency as possible, especially since conservation authorities share some municipalities.

Timelines are tight, therefore a straightforward and simple Transition Plan will be the most effective and suitable for the CVCA and its member municipalities. This is perhaps the one occasion when a conservation authority has been reduced in its breadth of programs and services may be an advantage.