

Full Authority
16 June 2016
Agenda Item: 16

Conservation Authorities Act Review

Background

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry initiated a review of the *Conservation Authorities Act* in 2015, seeking to identify opportunities to improve the legislative, regulatory and policy framework which presently governs conservation authorities. As part of the review, the Parliamentary Assistant to MNRF, MPP Eleanor McMahon invited the public to provide comments through a public consultation process. After the period for public input was closed, the comments were compiled and have formed the foundation for moving forward in the review process.

Current Status

The feedback confirmed all stakeholders were interested that the *CA Act* be modernized and that conservation authorities were important in managing natural resources at the watershed scale. The province has identified 5 key priorities for updating the *Conservation Authorities Act's* legislative, regulatory and policy framework. They are:

1. Strengthening oversight and accountability in decision-making
2. Increasing clarity and consistency in roles and responsibilities, processes and requirements
3. Improving collaboration and engagement among all parties involved in resource management
4. Modernizing funding mechanisms to support conservation authority operations.
5. Enhancing flexibility for the province to update the *Conservation Authorities Act* framework in the future.

These priorities were posted on the Environmental Registry (EBR) website on the 16th of May, 2016. The Ministry is soliciting public and stakeholders perspectives from interested parties in relation to the 5 key areas of improvement. In addition, the Conservation Authorities Act review consultation document: *Conserving Our Future, Proposed Priorities for Renewal* was also posted on the website to assist all parties.

In addition to the posting, MNRF has created 5 engagement/consultation sessions for the public. The sessions are being held throughout the province over a 2 week period. Should anyone wish to attend, the sessions are being held in Ottawa, Newmarket, Thunder Bay, Sudbury and London. Conservation Ontario will be attending 3 of the 5 sessions on behalf of all conservation authorities.

The Province is asking three main questions at these consultations:

1. What do you think of these priorities? Which are the most important and/or least important to you? Are there other priorities that should be considered?
2. What actions would you recommend the Province take to help achieve these priorities?
3. What do you see as some of the key challenges in achieving improvements under any or all of these priority areas?

Conservation Ontario will be providing draft collective positioning for Council review and approval at the June 27th meeting. This positioning will make up the formal submission to the Province's EBR posting. Working with the small CA Act Working Group, Conservation Ontario will finalize the collective position and submit it to the EBR posting on or just before September 9, 2016.

Each Conservation Authority is requested to submit their own comments by September 9th using the collective positioning as a basis; or by providing a letter of support for Conservation Ontario's collective response.

Board Discussion/Decision