

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Maitland Conservation Raises Concerns Over Amalgamation of Conservation Authorities**

*April 23, 2026*

The Maitland Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) is expressing significant concerns following the Province's move to consolidate Ontario's 36 conservation authorities into nine regional entities.

Maitland Conservation will become part of the new Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority along with the Ausable Bayfield, Saugeen, Grey Sauble, Nottawasaga and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authorities.

This new regional Conservation Authority will encompass watersheds that vary greatly in land use, watershed characteristics, population and environmental pressures.

Amalgamation is not likely to reduce costs, increase housing builds, improve the level of customer service in permitting, increase the safety of Ontarians from flood and erosion hazards, or improve local, watershed-based representation for the people who live, work, farm, or visit this beautiful province.

"For the sake of the people of Ontario, please do not amalgamate the Conservation Authorities," commented Ed McGugan, Chair of Maitland Conservation.

"We're calling on the Province to halt this amalgamation plan and commit to improving the unique watershed-based conservation system we all benefit from in this province."

The MVCA membership (comprised of Councillors from lower tier member municipalities), has outlined several specific related to costs, governance and conservation outcomes.

#### Key Concerns Identified by MVCA

1. Lack of Business Case

MVCA members noted that the Province has not developed a business case demonstrating that the proposed amalgamation will improve watershed health, resilience, or public safety in Ontario.

2. No Evidence of Improved Efficiency or Effectiveness

The Province has provided no evidence to show that consolidating Conservation Authorities into large regional corporations will result in more effective or more efficient service delivery across diverse watersheds.

3. Risks to Natural Hazard Management

Conservation Authorities have been delegated by the Province to regulate development in areas subject to flooding and erosion. These regulations are critical to reducing risks associated with flood damage, social disruption and loss of life.

The MVCA is concerned that larger, regionally governed authorities may weaken the ability to apply local watershed knowledge when managing flood and erosion hazards. Future development must not be directed into areas that are subject to flooding and erosion.

4. Threats to Watershed-Based Conservation

Conservation Authorities were established by the Province at the request of municipalities to restore and protect the health and resilience of natural resources in Ontario's watersheds. Healthy soils, rivers, lakes, wetlands and forests are essential to Ontario's economy and quality of life. It is our responsibility to maintain and enhance local natural resources to build a foundation for future generations.

5. Loss of Local Representation

Under the proposed governance structure, members of regional Conservation Authority boards will be appointed by upper-tier municipalities such as counties or regional governments. A representation-by-population model risks underrepresenting rural Conservation Authorities on regional boards. Rural municipalities will lose an effective voice in local watershed management and decision making.

6. Call for Reinvestment

The MVCA is calling on the Province to reinvest in the existing Conservation Authority model. Conservation Authorities were intended to be a partnership between the Province and local municipalities, guided by the founding principle that conservation efforts are most effective when led by the people who live and work within the watershed.

## Moving Forward

The MVCA remains committed to working collaboratively with the Province, member municipalities and partners to protect and enhance the Maitland watershed and the communities it serves. However, the MVCA strongly believes that watershed-based governance, supported by adequate provincial investment, remains the most effective approach to conserving local natural resources and managing natural hazards.

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