

November 26, 2025

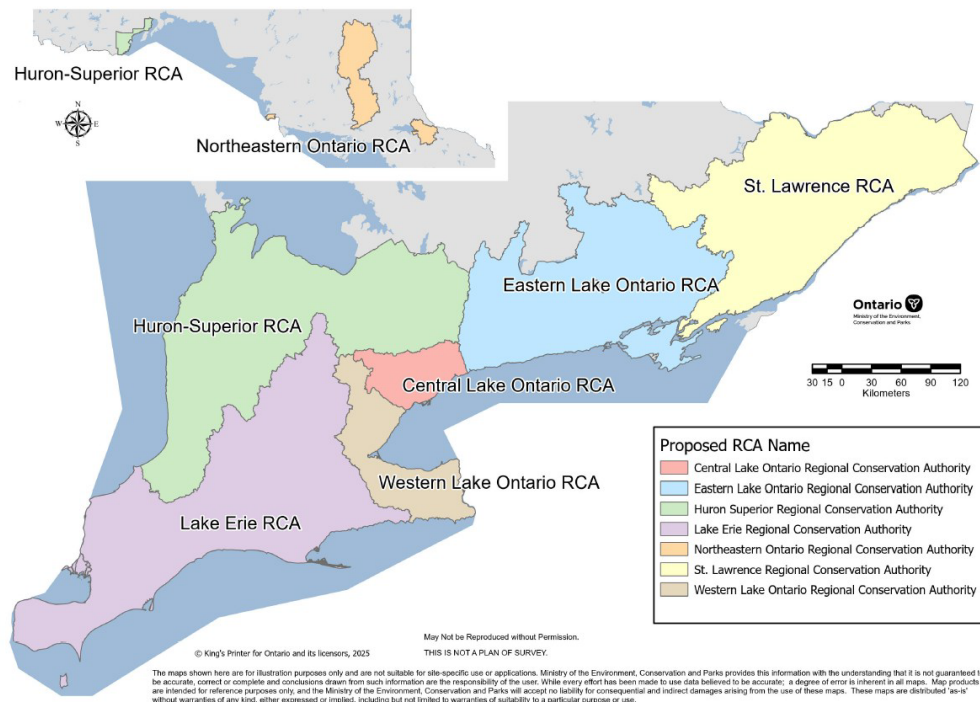
A Notice to FOCA Members

Show your support for keeping your Conservation Authority local

The province of Ontario has once again introduced changes to *the Conservation Authorities Act*, this time to create a provincial board-governed agency, the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, to oversee the governance of the Conservation Authorities (CAs) and other aspects of their operations.

Introduced on November 6th as part of Bill 68, the *Plan to Protect Ontario Act* (Budget Measures) 2025, the Bill was passed on November 25th. At the same time the province unveiled their proposal for changes to the boundaries of conservation authorities resulting in **36 CA's being amalgamated into just 7 regional conservation authorities**, as follows:

PROPOSED 7 REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES (RCA)



The province cites concern that Ontario currently has a *fragmented* system of 36 conservation authorities, each with different policies, standards, fees and levels of staffing and technical capabilities leading to unpredictable and inconsistent turnaround times for approvals creating uncertainty and delays for builders, landowners and farmers seeking permits.

Let's explore that a bit more.

Yes, it is true that there are 36 independent CAs in Ontario – just as there are 444 independent municipalities *formed to represent local interests and geography*. Each CA was created by their

member municipalities asking the province to form the CA – each with its own story of the issues that brought the organizations together to ensure their watershed(s) were managed to prevent future harm to residents or economies and to protect what was special.

Claiming that CAs are responsible for delaying the delivery of housing is a reach – and if they are at times, it is probably because housing is not suitable for that location. Even in a housing crisis residents still expect their home to be safe from natural hazards.

Yes, it is true that there are 130 municipalities (out of 320 with CAs) whose borders extend into one or more CAs, just as it is true that there are many landowners whose property crosses municipal borders. There will always be overlap as CAs were formed on a watershed boundary, for that is the logical unit of their jurisdiction.

In this proposal two of the proposed new regional authorities will have **80 member municipalities and another** two with around 48. How does one organization create and maintain relationships with that many politicians and staff? How will they be represented on a board? The proposed Eastern Lake Ontario CA will have a jurisdiction of over 28,000 sq km – a little more than the size of Lake Erie.

Amalgamation of this scale proposed will lose the local connection which is why CAs were formed in the first place.

Its time to tell your MPP and your municipal council that the model is not broken – that change of this magnitude needs to work for all the parties.

Details are on the Environmental Registry of Ontario: <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/025-1257> and comments will be received **until December 22nd**.

FOCA is submitting comments and we ask you to do the same.

Many municipalities are already speaking out about the proposals and passing **resolutions** such as the one that follows from the City of Belleville. FOCA also has created a [letter template](#) in Word format for your use and personalization.



Deborah Martin-Downs
Chair, FOCA Board of Directors



Lesley Lavender
FOCA CEO

EXAMPLE MUNICIPAL RESOLUTION:***Resolution City of Belleville [<https://www.quintenews.com/2025/11/24/371610/>]***

WHEREAS the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has posted Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 (Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities), proposing to reduce Ontario's 36 conservation authorities to 7 regional entities as part of a broader restructuring that would create a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized oversight and direction under the Conservation Authorities Act; and

WHEREAS under this proposal, the Quinte Conservation Authority (QCA) would be merged into a new "Eastern Lake Ontario Conservation Authority" together with:

- Central Lake Ontario CA
- Kawartha Region CA
- Otonabee Region CA
- Ganaraska Region CA
- Lower Trent Region CA
- Crowe Valley CA

Forming a single organization stretching from Oshawa, Kawartha Lakes, Hastings County, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and areas within Lennox & Addington.

WHEREAS the Quinte Conservation Board and the Municipality of the City of Belleville acknowledges and supports the provincial goals of improved efficiency, consistency and fiscal prudence in conservation delivery; but find the proposed "Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority configuration would:

1. Create a geographically vast and administratively complex entity, joining northern, rural and fast-growing south-eastern municipalities through the province with little shared watershed connection or economic alignment;
2. Dilute or eliminate a local accountability and municipal partnership, contrary to the principle that decisions are best made closest to the communities they serve;
3. Generate substantial transition expenses – including Human Resources, governance restructuring, IT migration and policy harmonization – that would divert resources from front-line service delivery and delay measurable outcomes, contrary to the Province's own business planning principle of "value for money, cost containment and service continuity"; and
4. Risk greater uncertainty and delay for developers, builders and farmers, as local permitting offices and staff familiar with site conditions are replaced by distant regional structures, making it more difficult for applicants to obtain timely local advice, resolve condition issues or expedite housing and infrastructure approvals that support the Province's "Build Faster" agenda; and

WHEREAS the QCA has already undertaken significant modernization work aligned with the provincial objectives, including:

- Numerous internal reviews to identify opportunities for cost savings and efficiencies, including the consolidation of 3 local Conservation Authorities within the Watershed into a single Authority;

- *Conversion of redundant and non-mandatory positions to frontline, mandatory service positions;*
- *Improvements in transparency and client communications*
- *Strong local representation of all municipalities that reside within the entire Watershed; Demonstrating that meaningful modernization can occur within the current watershed-based governance framework; and*

WHEREAS Council recognizes that the Quinte Conservation Authority serves a multitude of Eastern Ontario communities facing vastly different climatic, hydrological and infrastructure realities, and being surrounded by the Bay of Quinte, Lake Ontario and a number of local lakes, with properties subject to coastal erosion and flood-prone areas, which would be ill-served by a larger overarching administrative structure extending over more than 28,000 square kilometres;

THEREFORE BE IS RESOLVED THAT:

- *The Municipality of the City of Belleville does not support the proposed “Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257; and*
- *The City of Belleville instead endorses further provincial evaluation of a more focused, specific model as a geographically coherent, cost effective and locally accountable alternative that advances the government’s priorities of efficiency, red-tape reduction and timely housing delivery; and*
- *The City of Belleville requests that the Ministry engage directly with affected municipalities and conservation authorities across Eastern Ontario before finalizing any consolidation boundaries and legislative amendments; and*
- *That this resolution, with a letter from the Mayor, be forwarded to the Environmental Registry of Ontario consultations and to:*

The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and his Opposition Critics;

Local MPPs and Locals Mayors and councils