

GREENBELT FOUNDATION

Response to ERO number 025-1257

Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks



Possibility grows here.

Submitted: December 22, 2025

Edward McDonnell, Chief Executive Officer
Greenbelt Foundation



Possibility grows here.

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December 22, 2025

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Conservation and Source Protection Branch
300 Water Street North tower, 5th floor
Peterborough, ON, K9J 3C7

Re: Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities

Dear Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks staff,

The Greenbelt Foundation appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on ERO posting #025-1257. Our comments take into consideration the province's goals to improve consistency and capacity across Ontario's Conservation Authorities (CA) and additional government priorities to protect the health and well-being of communities, including through the protection, enhancement and restoration of natural systems in the Greenbelt.

The Greenbelt provides immense value to Ontario. The health and integrity of the Greenbelt's agricultural, natural heritage and water resource systems are significantly dependent on the effective watershed management, oversight, and regulation provided by Conservation Authorities and local municipalities. Conservation Authorities are also partners in delivering key aspects of the Greenbelt Plan, including the delineation of key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features across the Greenbelt and maintaining critical ecological functions and services relied on by communities.

In this context, our comments are focused on the proposal to consolidate and restructure the existing 36 Conservation Authorities into 7 regional bodies and the risk of losing local knowledge and voices in decision-making and alignment with environmental, social and economic conditions. A full and substantive consultation with municipalities, Conservation Authorities, key experts and members of the public will be critical to any potential systems change.

Risks such as erosion, flooding and declining water quality are increasing in southern Ontario due to growing demand, system pressures and degradation as well as the increasing impacts of climate change. Solutions require knowledge of and responses to site-specific challenges and impacts as well as the full drainage area, an approach that benefits from local involvement and is made possible through close collaborations that have been established between municipalities, their conservation authority partners and residents.

We ask that the Province engage with Conservation Authorities and municipalities to gain a better understanding of opportunities for modernization, streamlining and efficiency that could be achieved within the existing Conservation Authority structure, avoids the imposition of additional costs, supports well-established relationships and community ties, and continues the legacy of effective watershed management envied across Canada. Multiple boundary scenarios should be consulted on and considered that reflect existing working relationships, jurisdictions, and collaboration, such as Source Protection Regions.

We join the growing concern being voiced among the many directly affected by the government's proposal and recommend the province pause to allow for further clarification and consideration of its goals and approach. We ask the government to support a process that considers the value of local expertise, engagement and decision-making in continuing to provide a high level of protection to communities and the rewards of promoting local stewardship and volunteerism.

Thank you for consideration of this submission. We welcome and strongly encourage further engagement on these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward McDonnell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "E" and a long, sweeping tail.

Edward McDonnell
Chief Executive Officer