

CITY OF HAMILTON M O T I O N

Planning Committee: December 2, 2025

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR C. CASSAR.....

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR A. WILSON.....

CITY OF HAMILTON'S OPPOSITION TO *BILL 68 - Amalgamation of Conservation Authorities*

WHEREAS the *Conservation Authorities Act* (1946) established Conservation Authorities (CAs) as local, watershed-based bodies to manage natural resources in partnership with municipalities;

WHEREAS Conservation Authorities are governed by Boards of Directors comprised of municipally elected officials or appointees, ensuring direct accountability to the local tax base;

WHEREAS Bill 68 (Schedule 3) has received royal assent creating the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency whose objects include overseeing conservation authorities and the transition to a regional watershed-based framework for conservation authorities in Ontario with municipal cost contribution yet to be defined;

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;

WHEREAS the Province already has the authority to establish overarching legislation, regulations and standards through the *Conservation Authorities Act* and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks;

WHEREAS Conservation Authorities in partnership with their member municipalities have for decades tailored programs and services to local watershed and community needs; and

WHEREAS The Province has not substantiated a case for the proposed consolidation with an outline of specific performance objectives for CAs and a related evaluation of current performance;

WHEREAS the current funding model relies heavily on municipal levies and self-generated revenue, with the Province of Ontario contributing approximately 5% or less to operating budgets (e.g., the Hamilton Conservation Authority receives 35% of their funding from the City of Hamilton and less than 1% from the Province);

WHEREAS a forced amalgamation threatens to dilute local decision-making, sever the critical link between local property taxes and local service delivery, and ignore the unique hydrological and environmental differences between our distinct watersheds;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That the City of Hamilton

- a) Formally opposes the proposed amalgamation of Conservation Authorities as outlined in ERO 025-1257;
- b) Calls upon the Province of Ontario to maintain the current watershed-based governance model that ensures local accountability;
- c) Urges the Province to strengthen centralized standards, resources, and communication rather than undertaking broad structural amalgamation and to provide **sustainable, predictable provincial funding** across conservation authorities—particularly where gaps exist—to enable local CAs to advance ongoing digitization and systemization work that has already resulted in improved efficiency and consistency in recent years;
- d) Requests that the Ministry engage meaningfully and collaboratively with affected municipalities, CAs, and local First Nations before advancing any changes for CAs to ensure that any changes reflect both local needs and the practical realities of implementation; and
- e) That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, all local MPPs, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), All Ontario Municipalities, Conservation Ontario, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Grand River Conservation Authority, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton.