
To: UTRCA Board of Directors
From: Tracy Annett
Date: June 23, 2026
File Number: BoD-26-06-47
Agenda #: 6.3
Subject: Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority Guiding Principles for Transition

Recommendation

THAT the report on the Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority Guiding Principles for Transition be received;

AND THAT the Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority Guiding Principles for Transition be approved.

Background

On April 23, 2026, Bill 97, Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), received Royal Assent. Schedule 3 of the Bill outlined the legislative changes to the CA Act to consolidate Ontario's 36 CAs into 9 regional CAs. With the passing of the Bill, the February 1, 2027 consolidation of Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA), St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA), Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA), and Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) into the Western Lake Erie Regional (WLERCA) commences.

A project executive will be appointed by the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) to chair a transition committee comprised of representatives from each predecessor CA. That individual will become the first Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for WLERCA for up to the 24 months post amalgamation. It is anticipated that the project executive will be appointed in July 2026, with the transition committee commencing its activities immediately afterward.

In advance of the first meeting, the General Managers of the UTRCA, SCRCA, LTVCA and ERCA are meeting weekly to discuss potential issues with the amalgamation. In reviewing the actions of the surrounding new Regional CAs, it was decided that it would be appropriate to adopt some guiding principles to ensure fairness and transparency. The Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority Guiding Principles for Transition are provided as attached.

Summary

The principles are being presented to each individual Conservation Authority Board of Directors and once approved, will be used as a joint communications document. Moving forward, the plan is to continue shared discussions that can inform the Transition Committee's work.

Recommended By

Tracy Annett, General Manager

Attachment: Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority Guiding Principles for Transition

Guiding Principles for Transition

Over the past 80 years, Conservation Authorities have balanced fiscal responsibility with high-quality, locally responsive services. That success is rooted in a deep local knowledge and upheld by local connections with landowners, community groups and member municipalities. The consolidated authority should continue to be guided by science, local knowledge, and strong partnerships to protect people, property, and the natural environment.

Throughout this process, protecting staff and supporting a transition that respects municipal contributions and maintains public trust for all communities served should be a top priority. Successful consolidation will need to respect the past, while building upon shared achievements to create a unified region capable of delivering enhanced programs and services, advancing integrated watershed management and strengthening community partnerships across the region.

The principles are not listed in order of priority. Each principle is essential and collectively provide a framework for the future.

Accountable to Communities and Transparent Governance

Establish an effective, accountable, and transparent governance model that includes all participating municipalities and communities and complies with provincial legislation.

Fiscal Responsibility

Develop a fiscally responsible transition plan that protects short-term stability and long-term sustainability.

Commitment to Workforce Stability and Talent Retention

Prioritize the well-being, retention, and fair treatment of all staff while maintaining local service delivery throughout the consolidation process.

Service Excellence

Ensure that communities continue to receive high-quality, locally responsive programs and services.

Risk Management and Business Continuity

Ensure uninterrupted delivery of critical services while carefully managing risks associated with organizational change.

Watershed-Based Science Informed Management

Ensure consolidation does not dilute the watershed-based approach that defines Conservation Authorities.

Transparency, Trust and Clear Communication

Transparent communication is critical for maintaining confidence among staff, municipalities and the public.