

The logo for the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority is located in the upper right quadrant. It consists of a dark blue horizontal bar at the top, followed by the text "UPPER THAMES RIVER" in a dark blue serif font on a white background, and a green horizontal bar at the bottom containing the text "CONSERVATION AUTHORITY" in a white sans-serif font.


UPPER THAMES RIVER
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

A large blue banner with a white wavy pattern runs across the middle of the image. On the left side, there is a yellow L-shaped graphic element. The banner contains the main title in white text.

Proposed Consolidation of Conservation Authorities

Mayor's Meeting
City of London
January 16, 2026

Provincial Announcement Timeline



June 2025	October 31	November 6	November 7	Spring 2026
Chief Conservation Executive	Provincial announcement	Bill 68 "Plan to Protect Ontario Act"	ERO posting: Proposed boundaries for regional consolidation	Additional legislative and regulatory changes expected
Newly created role to lead efforts to create consistency, reduce costs, and speed up critical infrastructure and housing development.	Intention to create a new provincial board-governed agency to provide centralized leadership and consolidate 36 CAs into regional CAs.	Included in the budget measures are changes to the Conservation Authorities Act providing for the creation of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency.	Circulated proposal to consolidate 36 CAs into 7 Regional CAs, inviting comments by December 22, 2025.	Current Board members will sit until October 2026 following municipal elections. New governance model to take effect in 2027.



Consultation

- ERO Posting on Boundaries for Regional Consolidation closed December 22, 2025
- Municipal and CA information sessions on November 18
- Regional Round Tables with CAs and municipalities. London December 12

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

ERO number	025-1257
Notice type	Policy
Act	Conservation Authorities Act, R.S.O. 1990
Posted by	Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Notice stage	Proposal Updated
Proposal posted	November 7, 2025
Comment period	November 7, 2025 - December 22, 2025 (45 days) Closed
Last updated	December 9, 2025

Discussion Questions

- What do you see as key factors to support a successful transition and outcome of regional conservation authority consolidation?
- What opportunities or benefits may come from a regional conservation authority framework?
- Do you have suggestions for how governance could be structured at the regional conservation authority level, including suggestions around board size, make-up and the municipal representative appointment process?
- Do you have suggestions on how to maintain a transparent and consultative budgeting process across member municipalities within a regional conservation authority?
- How can regional conservation authorities maintain and strengthen relationships with local communities and stakeholders?

Current CAs

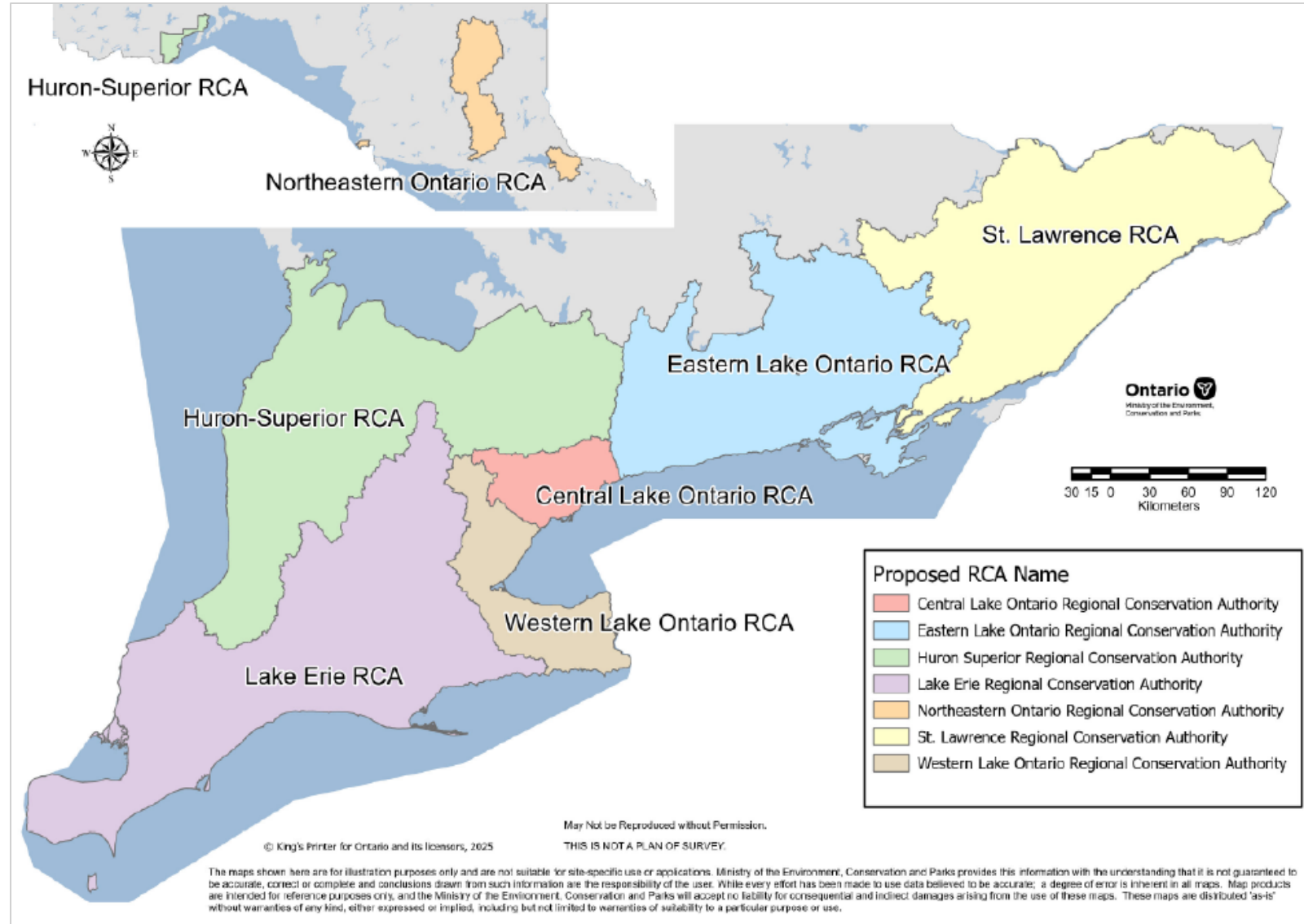
In 1946, the Ontario government passed the *Conservation Authorities Act*, which enabled municipalities to create watershed-based resource management agencies and assume responsibility for their governance and funding at the local level.

- 36 CAs are organized on watershed boundaries
- Meaningful scale for planning and promoting efficient and sustainable use of natural resources
- Consequently, cross municipal boundaries

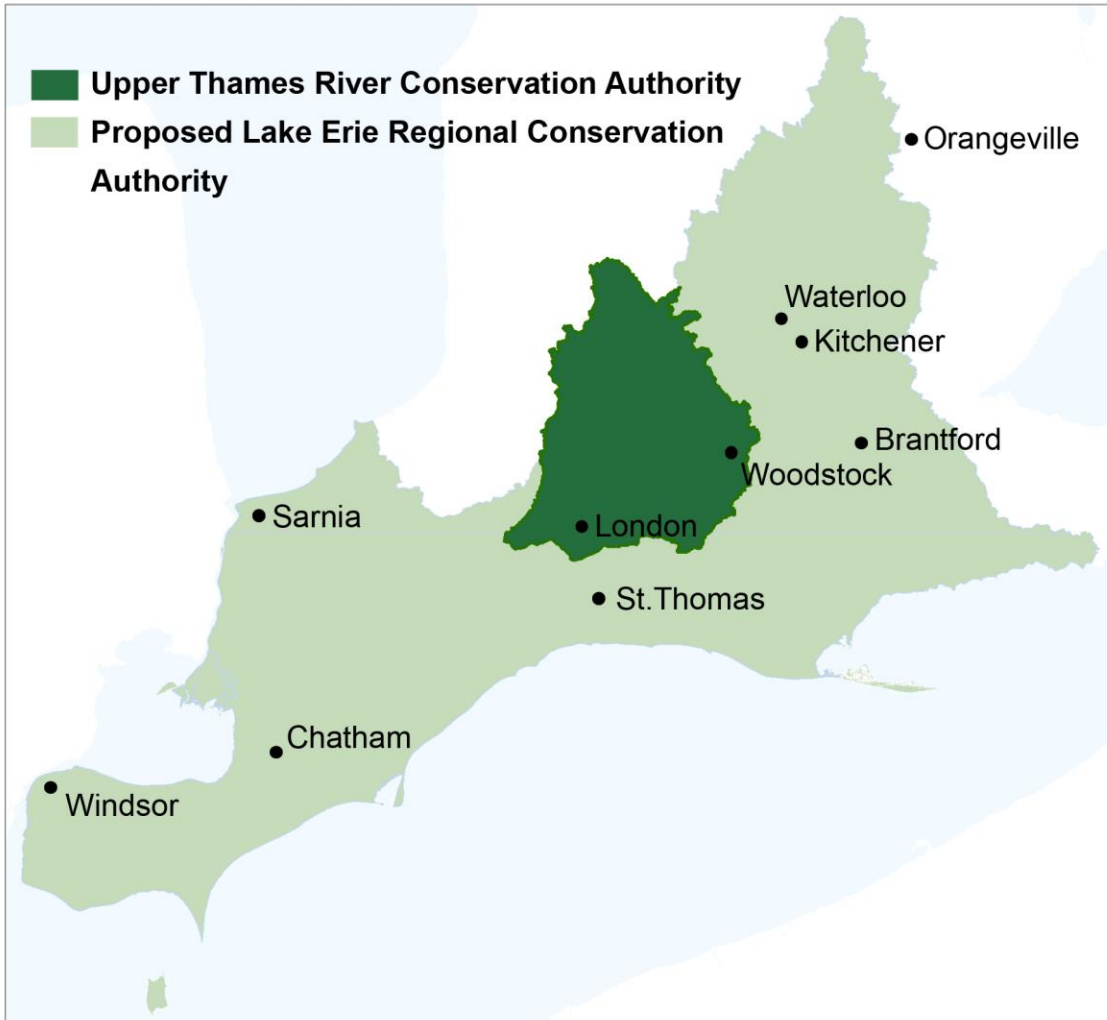


Proposed 7 Regional Conservation Authorities

- Regional watershed based
- Province proposed that they will reduce overlap and administrative duties, balance expertise across CAs and providing service continuity



Map of Proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority



Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority include:

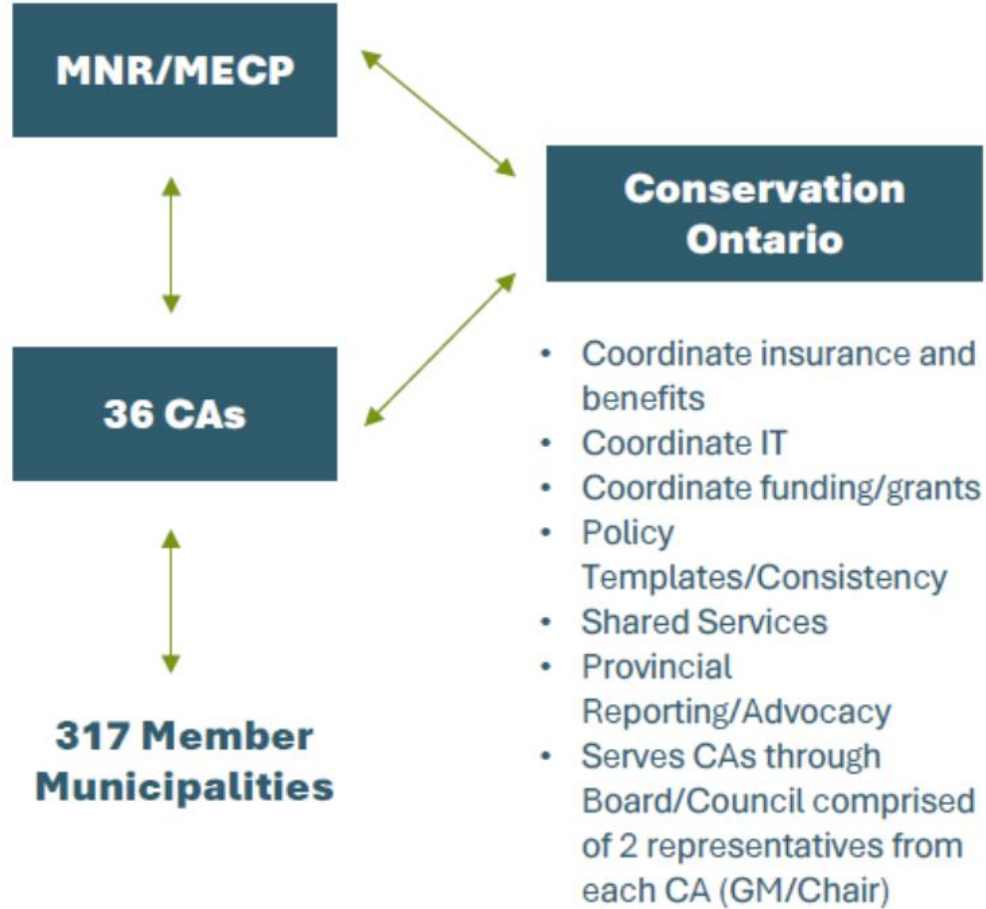
- Essex Region CA
- Lower Thames Valley CA
- St. Clair Region CA
- Upper Thames River CA
- Kettle Creek CA
- Catfish Creek CA
- Long Point Region CA
- Grand River CA

Municipalities that would fall within the proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority include:

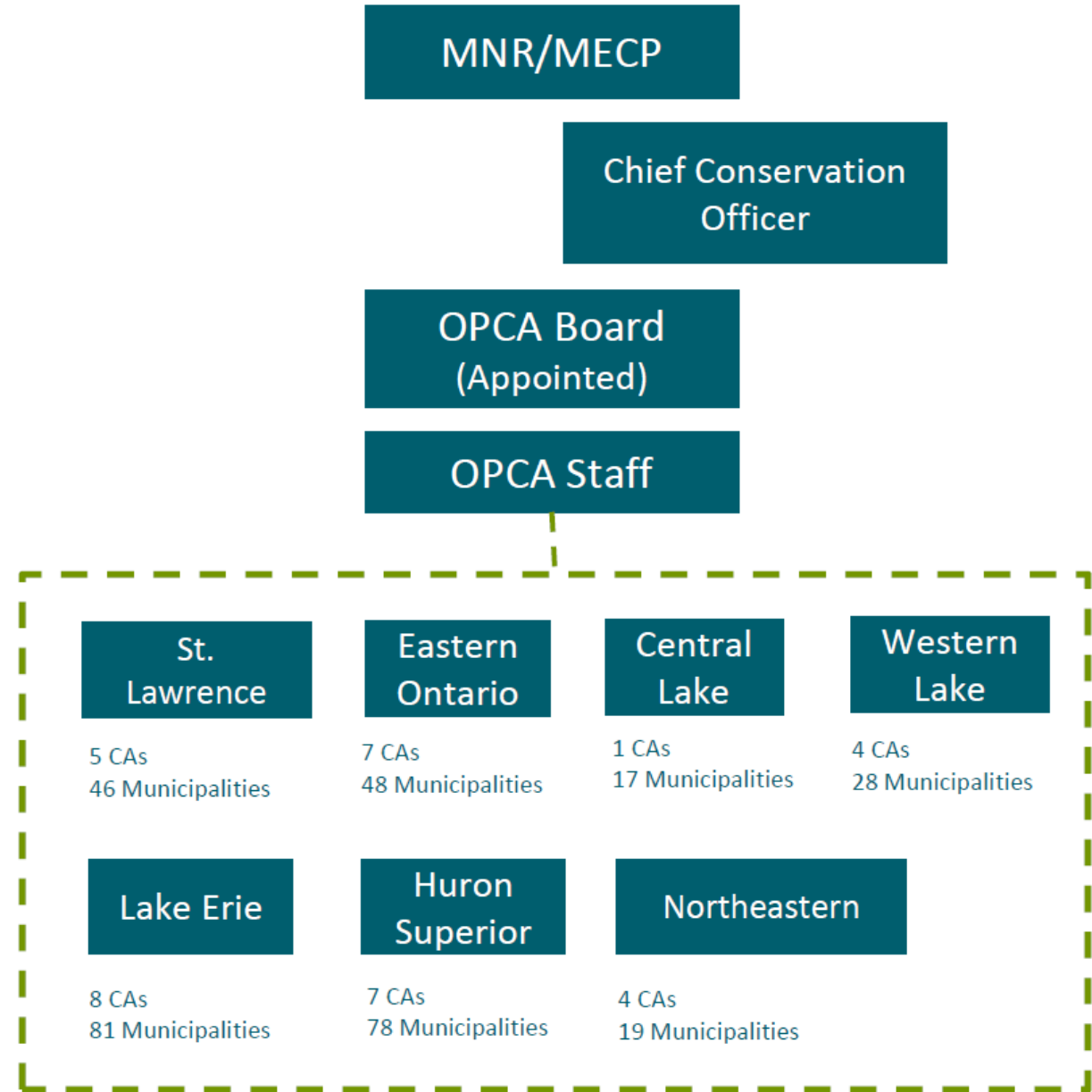
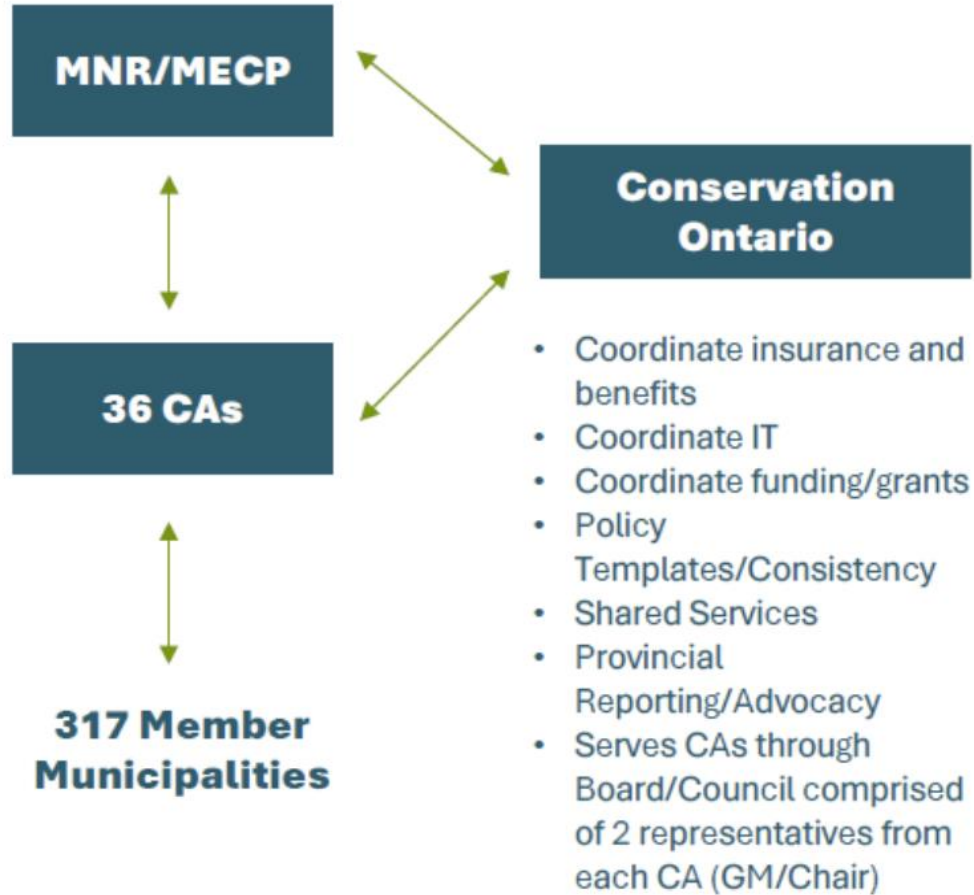
- City of Brantford
- City of Cambridge
- City of Guelph
- City of Hamilton
- City of Kitchener
- City of London
- City of Sarnia
- City of St. Thomas
- City of Stratford
- City of Waterloo
- City of Windsor
- City of Woodstock
- County of Brant
- Haldimand County
- Municipality of Bayham
- Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston
- Municipality of Central Elgin
- Municipality of Chatham-Kent
- Township of East Zorra-Tavistock
- Township of Enniskillen
- Township of Guelph/Eramosa
- Township of Lucan Biddulph
- Township of Malahide
- Township of Mapleton
- Township of Melancthon
- Township of North Dumfries
- Township of Norwich
- Municipality of Dutton/Dunwich
- Municipality of Huron East
- Municipality of Lambton Shores
- Municipality of Leamington
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- Municipality of North Perth
- Municipality of South Huron
- Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
- Municipality of Thames Centre
- Municipality of West Elgin
- Municipality of West Perth
- Norfolk County
- Town of Amherstburg
- Town of Aylmer
- Town of Erin
- Town of Essex
- Town of Grand Valley
- Town of Halton Hills
- Township of Pelee
- Township of Perth East
- Township of Perth South
- Township of Puslinch
- Township of Southgate
- Township of South-West Oxford
- Township of Southwold
- Township of St. Clair
- Township of Strathroy-Caradoc
- Town of Ingersoll
- Town of Kingsville
- Town of Lakeshore
- Town of Lasalle
- Town of Milton
- Town of Minto
- Town of Mono
- Town of Petrolia
- Town of Plympton-Wyoming
- Town of St. Marys
- Town of Tecumseh
- Town of Tillsonburg
- Township of Adelaide-Metcalf
- Township of Amaranth
- Township of Blandford-Blenheim
- Township of Centre Wellington
- Township of Dawn-Euphemia
- Township of East Garafraxa
- Township of East Warwick
- Township of Wellesley
- Township of Wellington North
- Township of Wilmot
- Township of Woolwich
- Township of Zorra
- Village of Newbury
- Village of Oil Springs
- Village of Point Edward

17 Municipalities in the UTRCA vs 81 Municipalities in LERCA

Existing Framework



Proposed Framework



Consultation: Information Sessions

- This is a “vision” with much left “TBD” through consultation
- Templates exist for this type of consolidation (e.g., health units, municipalities)
- Expert guidance and access to consultants will be provided through OPCA
- All local assets would become assets of new Regional CA
- Regional CA boards will be in control of transition, timeline, and structure of new RCAs
- Direction to CAs will commence as soon as Agency is established to ensure smooth transition
- Agency will establish standards, KPIs that will be tied to provincial funding



Considerations: Governance/Municipal Representation

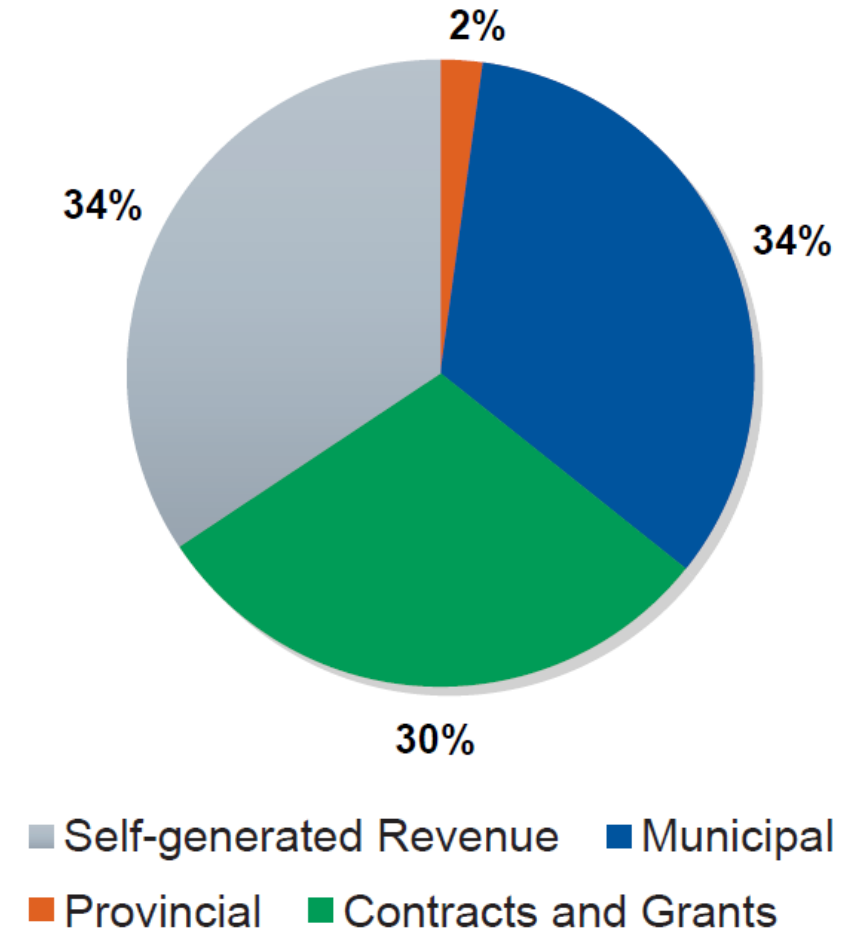
- UTRCA created in 1947 as a partnership between member municipalities to use local knowledge and expertise to make decision regarding the management of the watershed's natural resources.
- 81 member municipalities in the LERCA vying for a voice and representation at 1 regional CA Board. This shift weakens the local ties, community level representation and meaningful influence in decision-making.
- Risk losing local voice in the proposed regional framework.



UTRCA reduction in board size in mid 90's, key concern was that balance between rural and urban representation be maintained.

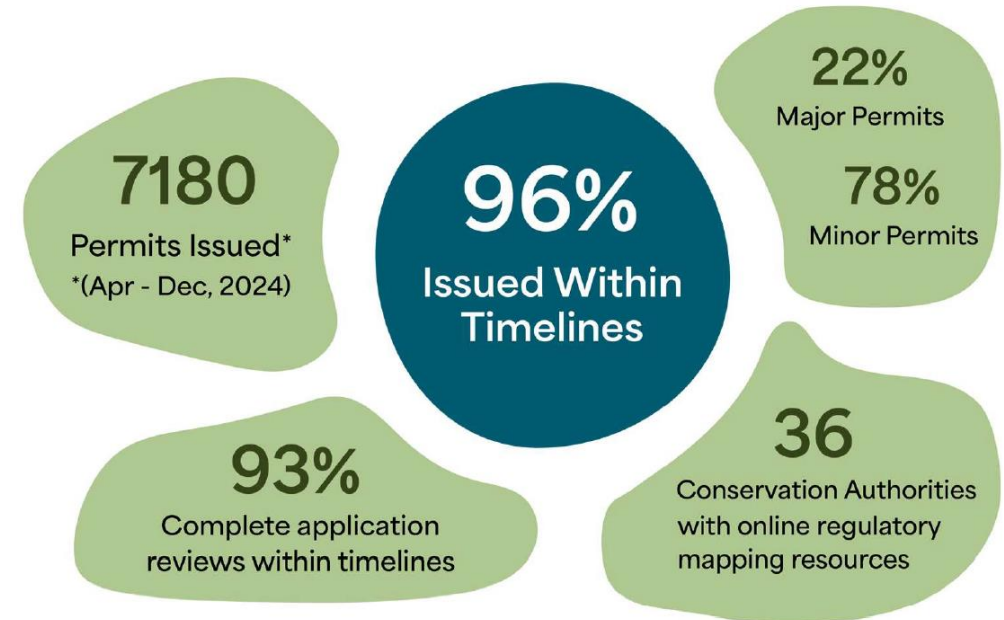
Considerations: Economic Impacts

- Provincial contributions represent just 2% of UTRCA's operating budget, additional Provincial investment is required.
- UTRCA's member municipalities currently fund 34% of UTRCA overall programs and services
- Regional cost-sharing model could unintentionally create inequalities between urban and rural municipality's ability to pay
- OPCA will have the ability to apportion costs to Regional CA's. How will apportionment be determined?
- No Cost-benefit Analysis – significant costs for transition (IT, Branding), policy and staffing harmonization
- Financial reserves and funds generated locally should be directed back to the community/property in which they originated



Considerations: Service Levels

- 96% of permits are issued within the province's legislated timeframe.
- Programs and services were developed by local CA boards, tailored to the unique needs of their communities, local watershed conditions, priorities, budgets and community input.
- Significant changes to the roles of CA in land use planning with little time to evaluate their impact on development outcomes. Proposal will introduce additional unknowns.
- CAs support the desire to streamline approvals through consistent policies and e-permitting services - current framework is not preventing this from happening.



Note:

1. **Need provincial technical guides**
2. **Can achieve consistent standards through policy and regulations**
3. **Need adequate funding to implement**

Considerations: Assets

- Financial and legal due diligence process is necessary to assess existing liabilities, assets, and any restrictions and complexities on transferring assets from local control to regional oversight.
- Proposed model, all assets would be transferred to the regional CA.
- Land assets were entrusted for long-term protection, stewardship, and public good with the expectation that they would be cared for by locally governed CAs.



Considerations: "Local" Matters

- Donations of land, stewardship and employment opportunities are dependent on local connections.
- Consolidating and potentially centralizing administration could reduce responsiveness, delay decisions, and weakening local expertise and community connections.
- CAs were built on local relationships and face-to-face communications – local "boots on the ground" are essential.





Conservation Authority Changes

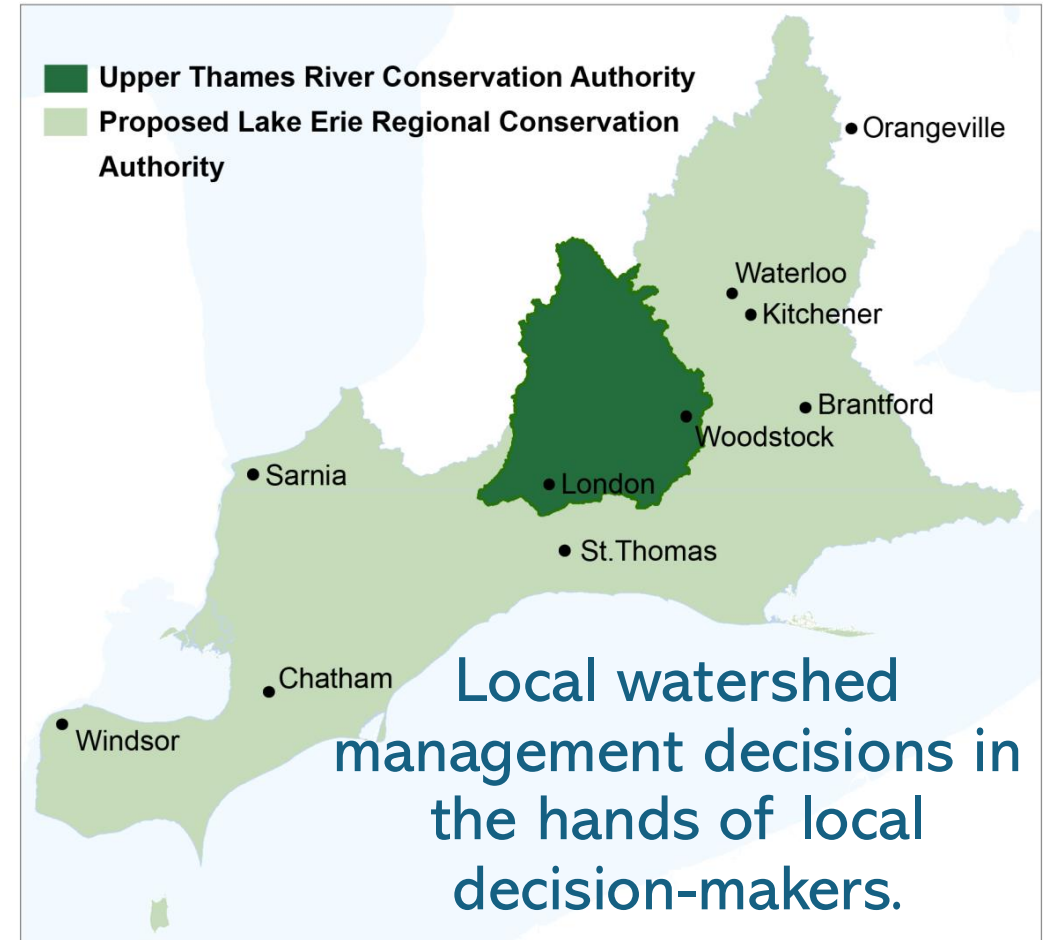
- Recent amendments to the CA Act have already improved standardization and modernization and increased municipal control over budgets and programs and services

Mandatory Programs and Services	Budget and Apportionment	Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits	Deliverables outlined in 686/21
O. Reg. 686/21, October 2021	O. Reg. 402/22, April 2022	O. Reg. 41/24 , April 1, 2024	Completed December 31, 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required CA to categorize programs and services into mandatory, municipally requested, and deemed advisable by the CA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlined new budget process • Minister Fee Class identified programs a CA could charge fees for and requires all CAs to have a written fee policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One regulation for all CAs • Introduced exemptions • Mapping requirements • Smaller regulated area (i.e., wetlands) • Appeal mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed-based Resource management Strategy • Lands Inventory • Conservation Areas /Lands Strategy • Operation Plans & Asset Management • Plans Flood & Erosion Infrastructure

Summary of Key Messages

We support efforts to enhance expertise, capacity, and program delivery across Ontario. Urge the Province to work collaboratively with municipalities and CAs to identify the most cost-effective consolidation.


- The size and scope is too large. A more measured approach without negative / unintended consequences,
- Opportunities for shared services or consolidation at a smaller scale,
- A comprehensive cost benefit analysis to provide evidence that the consolidations reduce costs and provide better services,
- Governance models that continue to support local decision-making that balances rural and urban priorities and interests while adding indigenous perspectives,
- Local offices and existing staff levels must remain to preserve local expertise, relationships and responsiveness,
- Standardization can be achieved with current structure with updated technical guidance, policy approaches / regulation, and modernization tools.



ERO Responses

- Joint letter from 74 retired professionals, all of whom have decades of service working for provincial ministries or conservation authorities
- Ontario Nature submission on behalf of 94 environmental organizations
- Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada, Dr. Justina Rae
- Canadian Environmental Law Association
- Ontario Mutual Insurance Association
- Ontario Society of Professional Engineers
- Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- Indigenous communities within the Proposed Lake Erie Regional CA





CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

AMO's Submission on Proposed Regional Consolidation of Conservation Authorities

AMO's recommendations to the province are centered on greater and collaborative stakeholder engagement that's foundational to addressing the governance and funding challenges in the current proposal

[READ POST](#)

Recommendations:

- 1) Maintain and prioritize local governance, expertise and decision making in CA consolidation
- 2) Fund transition costs to mitigate service delivery impacts
- 3) Restore a 50-50 municipal funding partnership that reflects increased provincial authority over CA operations, and potentially its fees, and
- 4) Collaborate on creating an implementation working group that would develop options, and group membership would include AMO, Conservation Ontario, select CAs and municipalities, developers, and Indigenous communities.



Questions