

Media Release

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New *Conservation Authorities Act* Will Help to Build Stronger Environment

NEWMARKET (December 12, 2017) Conservation Authorities are pleased to see the Province take a bold step to ensure more resiliency across Ontario watersheds through the passage of Bill 139, which includes a new *Conservation Authorities Act* (CA Act).

The modernizing of this 1946 legislation provides the foundation for Conservation Authorities to strengthen their watershed management role and also develop a more defined role around climate change adaptation.

“The new *Conservation Authorities Act* signals to us that the Province wants to work more closely with Conservation Authorities and we’re very pleased with that.” Dick Hibma, the Chair of Conservation Ontario stated. Conservation Ontario is the umbrella organization that represents Conservation Authorities.

“Conservation Authorities are very cost-efficient, capable partners. They already have a close working relationship with many provincial ministries which is critical to addressing the economic, environmental and social impacts of climate change and other issues.”

Through their monitoring and watershed management programs, Conservation Authorities see the growing impacts of climate change in Ontario’s watersheds on a daily basis. This includes more frequent flooding, stressed biodiversity, and reduced water levels and flow in streams and rivers.

The *Conservation Authorities Act* has been under review for two years and has received input from a wide range of sectors including environment, industry, agriculture and municipalities. The modernized legislation recognizes watershed management as a key tool in helping Ontario to adapt to the impacts of issues such as rapid growth and climate change.

Some of the key changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* includes:

- establishment of a service delivery review table,
- development of a more defined role around climate change adaptation,
- greater transparency and accountability of conservation authorities, and
- modernized funding mechanisms.

“We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Province to develop and shape the evolving role of Conservation Authorities in managing impacts on Ontario’s natural resources, including important drinking water sources,” Hibma said.

Ontario’s 36 watershed-based Conservation Authorities play a central role in the restoration, conservation and management of our important water and land resources and do so in partnership with many different agricultural, environmental, municipal, and other agencies.

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