

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, April 10, 2026 Meeting

FROM: John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer

**RE: PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSERVATION
AUTHORITIES ACT (BILL 97) AND REGIONAL
CONSOLIDATION OF ONTARIO'S CONSERVATION
AUTHORITIES**

KEY ISSUE

To provide an overview of the proposed amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act in Schedule 3 of Bill 97, Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026 and the decision by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) on the boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities (ERO# 025-1257).

RECOMMENDATION:

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Proposed Amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act (Bill 97) and Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities Report be received.

BACKGROUND

TRCA's Board of Directors endorsed the report on the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (Bill 68) and Proposed Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities (ERO# 025-1257) at its meeting on November 28, 2025. TRCA's submission to MECP in response to the ERO posting is provided in Attachment 1. In the proposal, the watershed-based boundaries of TRCA's jurisdiction were to remain the same with our name proposed to change to Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority. TRCA's submission expressed appreciation for keeping our watershed boundaries intact in the proposal but also communicated legal, governance, financial and administrative implications of the proposal as outlined in our Board report. This included the potential disruption and cost involved with our proposed name change or any potential changes to TRCA's boundaries that could be an outcome of the provincial consultation process.

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To accelerate informed decision-making and achieve efficiencies in support of provincial priorities, TRCA's submission also included a suite of recommendations for consideration by MECP and the Chief Conservation Executive. These recommendations were developed based on our experience of successfully delivering programs and services as Ontario's most highly populated and growing CA. Ministry staff have arranged a meeting in April with TRCA's CEO to discuss our ERO submission and recommendations.

On March 10, 2026, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, joined by Hassaan Basit, Ontario's Chief Conservation Executive, [announced](#) the Province's decision to consolidate Ontario's 36 CAs into nine regional conservation authorities (CAs) targeted to take effect in early 2027 and to advise that further legislative amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act (CA Act) would be forthcoming to enable this transition. MECP released a [resource document](#) summarizing actions taken to date, a map of the nine regional CAs and their proposed plans and next steps in the transition process to be led by the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency ([OPCA](#)).

As part of this decision, TRCA's watershed boundaries will be consolidated with Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority's ([CLOCA](#)) watershed boundaries to create the Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority. CLOCA's [watershed jurisdiction](#) includes the Region of Durham, the Cities of Oshawa and Pickering, the Towns of Ajax and Whitby, a large portion of the Municipality of Clarington and portions of the Townships of Scugog and Uxbridge (see Appendix 1).

To support regional conservation authorities throughout the transition process, the province is providing annual funding to the OPCA in the amount of \$3 million, beginning in 2026. This funding is to be used by the agency to support conservation authorities as needed during the transition period. Following transition, this annual funding would go toward helping regional authorities achieve program improvements.

RATIONALE

Summary of CA Act Amendments

[Bill 97, Plan to Protect Ontario Act \(Budget Measures\), 2026](#) was introduced into the legislature on March 26, 2026. The following is a high-level summary of the proposed amendments to the [CA Act](#) contained in [Schedule 3](#) of Bill 97:

Transition to New Authorities

- February 1, 2027, or such later date as may be prescribed by regulations by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC).

Statutory Amalgamation

TRCA will be consolidated with CLOCA, (referred to as predecessor authorities), to create the new Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority (CLORCA) by way of statutory amalgamation. A number of rules apply to the amalgamated authority, including but not limited to the following:

- Ensuring all rights, obligations assets and liabilities from TRCA and CLOCA would become those of the new regional CA;
- Providing for the continuation of all existing agreements, contracts, permitting or other actions underway by both predecessor authorities;
- Ensuring the current jurisdiction of TRCA and CLOCA are combined to become the jurisdiction of the consolidated regional CA;
- Employees of predecessor authorities immediately before the transition date become employees of the new authority and employment before and after the transition date is continuous;
- Any advisory board of a predecessor authorities is continued in the new authority; and
- Such other rules, including transitional rules, as may be prescribed by the regulations.

Transition Committees:

The OPCA (the Agency) will establish transition committees to prepare for the amalgamation within 90 days of Bill 97 receiving Royal Assent.

- Each CA shall appoint a municipally elected board member and either the chief administrative officer (CAO)/general manager (GM) or another officer/senior staff member of the authority;
- The Agency may appoint other individuals as it considers advisable to be members of the transition committee;
- The Agency will appoint a project executive who will chair the transition committee; the project executive is not an employee of the Agency; and
- The Agency may issue directions to the transition committee, the project executive or to both, governing the roles, responsibilities, practices and procedures of the transition committee and project

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executive or both, to take specified actions to prepare for the amalgamation into the new authority.

Transition Plan: Development and Implementation

- Each transition committee shall prepare a transition plan to prepare for the amalgamation into the new authority and submit the plan to the Agency for review by the date specified by the Agency;
- After the Agency has reviewed the transition plan, the Agency shall provide comments on the plan and may issue directions to the transition committee respecting revisions that must be made or confirm that no revisions are necessary;
- The transition committee shall provide a copy of the final transition plan to the new authority's predecessor authorities and the Agency.
- By a date specified by the Agency, the transition committee shall provide a summary of the final transition plan to the participating municipalities of the predecessor CAs and to the municipalities that will be the participating municipalities of the new authority; and
- Each new authority shall implement the final transition plan and shall report to the Agency on its progress respecting implementation in accordance with such requirements as may be specified by the Agency.

Minister's Direction

The Minister may, for purposes of facilitating the transition to a regional watershed-based framework for authorities, issue a direction to an authority, (e.g., governing budgetary and apportionment matters) and such directions will prevail over the provisions of the Act and regulation in the event of a conflict, during the transition period.

First Chief Administrative Officer

- The project executive appointed by the Agency to chair the transition committee would also serve as the inaugural CAO of the new regional CA for a term of two years upon consolidation; and
- During the term, the Agency may issue a notice of replacement of the CAO and appoint a new CAO for the remainder of the two-year term or if the notice does not appoint a CAO, the authority shall appoint a CAO for such terms as the authority specifies.

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Governance of New Authority (Members, Chair, etc.)

- The council of each participating municipality shall appoint their members no later than the day before the transition date. Members must reside in the participating municipality;
- The number of members to be appointed shall be in accordance with the method prescribed by regulation, but a minimum of one member per participating municipality and up to a maximum number to be prescribed in regulation;
- The method for determining the number of members to be appointed by each participating municipality shall be based on each municipality's population within the authority's area of jurisdiction in proportion to the total population within the CA area of jurisdiction;
- Another method may be used to appoint members where all participating municipalities agree on the new method and enter into an agreement, and the number of appointed members does not exceed the maximum as provided for in the regulations. A copy of such an agreement must be available on the CA website and provided to the Agency;
- The council of a participating municipality shall take into consideration criteria when appointing a member who is not a member of council (e.g., knowledge and experience in public administration, knowledge of programs and services provided by authorities, and other such matters as the Minister may prescribe by regulation);
- The Minister may appoint an additional member who is a representative of the agricultural sector with voting limitations, (i.e., shall not vote on resolutions to enlarge area of jurisdiction, amalgamate authorities, dissolve Authority, or budgetary matters)
- Members are appointed for a term of up to four years, and members can be replaced by their council;
- Members are eligible for reappointment; and
- Chairs and vice chairs shall hold office for a term not exceeding two years and shall serve as chair or vice-chairs for no more than eight years in total, whether the years are served consecutively or otherwise.

Watershed Councils

- An authority shall, in accordance with the regulations, if any, establish one or more watershed councils for the purposes of assisting the authority in identifying local priorities with respect to its programs and

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services and to ensure that local interests are considered as part of the authority's decision-making process; and

- An authority shall comply with any requirements prescribed by the regulations with respect to composition, functions, powers, duties, activities, and procedures of a watershed council.

Other Amendments:

- Definition updates to existing and new for purposes of the transition;
- Authority by-laws: Includes housekeeping changes and a new requirement that the assigned duties of a CAO appointed by the authority be reflected in the authority's by-law;
- Updated 'No personal liability' clause to include the project executive and members of the transition committee; and
- Adding new LGIC and Minister regulation-making authorities to facilitate the transition (e.g., transition date, prescribing method for determining number of members, any additional 'transition rules', etc.)

Consultation with MECP

Following the morning announcement on March 10, 2026, MECP conducted a virtual technical briefing for the Chairs and CAOs/GMs of all CAs about their decision on the regional CA boundaries and provided an overview of the next steps in the transition process and timelines. A similar briefing was provided to municipalities. Following the announcement, TRCA staff have been in discussions with CLOCA's CAO and Region of Durham staff.

MECP has scheduled a virtual information session on April 9, 2026 for CA Board Chairs and CAOs/GMs to provide an overview of the proposed legislative amendments and associated changes in Bill 97, a high-level summary of the proposed transition path and key milestones and next steps. In advance of this session and at MECP's request, TRCA has submitted questions based on staff's initial assessment of the legislation. In addition to the legislative amendments, important details in future regulations are also required to facilitate the transition process. Given the proposed transition timelines and taking into account the timing of the municipal election, it will be critical to fully understand the Agency's timelines and plans early on to ensure business continuity.

TRCA and CLOCA, while both undertaking work in similar urban and

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urbanizing contexts in Durham Region, are significantly different organizations in terms of the size, scale, and breadth of programs delivered. For example, in 2025 TRCA had a budget of \$192.5 million with CLOCA having a budget of just over \$11.5 million. In addition, TRCA has a full-time permanent complement of 652, with an additional 500 to 700 seasonal and contract staff depending on grants and fee for service requests from government (largely municipal) and agency partners. In comparison, CLOCA has a complement of 55 staff, with approximately 30 to 40 additional contract and seasonal staff. Based on current estimates, the population within TRCA's watersheds totals approximately 5.2 million while the population in CLOCA's watersheds totals approximately 430 thousand.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 1 Environmental Protection and Hazard Management:

- 1.1 Deliver provincially mandated services pertaining to flood and erosion hazards

Pillar 2 Knowledge Economy:

- 2.4 Integrate environmental considerations and science into decision making

Pillar 4 Service Excellence:

- 4.2 Provide and manage an efficient and adaptable organization

Pillar 4 Service Excellence:

- 4.3 Responsive relationships and a trusted brand with a reputation for excellence

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Staff are engaged in the policy analysis work in the normal course of duty, with funding support provided by TRCA's participating municipalities to account 120-12. No additional funding is proposed to support the policy analysis work associated with the preparation of these comments.

Further understanding of the details associated with the provincial transition

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process is required to assess the financial implications of the amalgamation of TRCA and CLOCA. At this point in time, it is expected that TRCA staff resources, including the CEO's Office, Corporate Services, Property and Legislative Services, and Policy and Planning will be required to dedicate significant time in support of the provincially led transition process. This effort will include preparation and attendance for transition meetings and the production of information which may impact the timing and delivery of other corporate priorities. All efforts will be made to maintain service delivery standards during this transition period and staff will continue to keep the Board apprised. TRCA remains committed to maintaining business continuity and providing service excellence throughout the transition period.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

This report provides an overview of the amendments to the CA Act proposed in Schedule 3 of Bill 97. Staff will continue to keep the Board of Directors informed and report back as additional details about the transition process become available through consultation and meetings with MECP and the OPCA.

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Date: April 1, 2026

Attachments: 2

Attachment 1: TRCA Submission to ERO# 025-1257

Appendix 1: Durham Region Conservation Authority Map