

This backgrounder introduces you to a project that might be of interest to conservation authorities -- WaterScape III, being delivered by the Ontario Headwaters Institute in partnership with numerous organizations.

Established in 2003, the OHI initially focused on headwaters, the foundation of our watersheds. In 2018, we expanded our mandate to full watersheds, their natural heritage, and the health of receiving waters such as the Great Lakes. We address these issues through three portfolios: research, education, and civic engagement, which requires collaborative efforts with other organizations.

For 2020, we are pleased to announce WaterScape III, a collaborative effort to develop a renewed policy framework to ensure resilient landscapes and healthy water across South-central Ontario, found on a dedicated website at www.waterscape.ca.

WaterScape III builds on past collaborative efforts, including WaterScapes I and WaterScape II. The former held six meetings with more than 150 participants in 2018, leading to a submission with more than 140 co-signatories. The latter conducted a survey in 2019 with 128 respondents – 32% of 400 contacts – on sustainable planning in Ontario.

WaterScape III will:

- Circulate an extensive discussion document with two over-arching policy recommendations and 22 suggested priority actions;
- Solicit comments on the document through our website, social media, and presentations;
- Hold 10 – 15 presentations across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and in The Land Between;
- Use comments to issue a second draft of the document for final comments; and,
- Produce a final document for endorsement by organizations and members of the public.

The timing is important. Ontario's environmental protections are being reduced and public consultation is being constrained. WaterScape III seeks to facilitate increased understanding of:

- The importance of protecting our lands and water;
- The interdependence of environmental, economic, and social vitality; and,
- The need for sustainable planning, fulsome consultation, cumulative monitoring, adaptive management, and equitable access to legal recourse.

We are particularly concerned that recent changes to and current reviews of the Conservation Authorities Act, as well as the government's perceived direction on flooding, indicate the dismantling of historic efforts on the conservation of lands, watershed management, and flooding. We are concerned that this will present yet another outcome where key functions will be abandoned rather than improved.

We hope you find this note helpful, and ask you to consider sharing it internally and externally as you see fit.

Sincerely,

Andrew McCammon
Executive Director