

COMMUNICATION 131033

Received from: Joanna Bowes, Manager of Development Services
Addressed to: Committee of the Whole
Date: February 18, 2020
Topic: Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority

SUMMARY

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has been holding consultations across Ontario to determine the core mandate of Conservation Authorities. Unfortunately, no consultations were held within an acceptable distance for staff or Council to attend to provide input. As such, staff would like to forward comments to the Ministry which will help clarify the role of the Conservation Authority from the Town's perspective and provide support to them in the maintenance of their current role within the Province of Ontario.

COMMENTS

Conservation Authorities are typically understood to provide a role in relation to flood forecasting and warnings in order to protect residents and their properties within their respective watershed.

Other lesser known functions provided by Conservation Authorities include:

- core watershed management services such as floodplain mapping, watershed-scale data collection, management and modelling;
- researching, drafting and providing information through watershed-based technical studies, plans, assessments and strategies.

Many Conservation Authorities, municipalities and lake associations share the same challenges that can potentially be dealt with at a watershed level. Other more critical issues such as climate change can be viewed under a broader lens in conjunction with federal, provincial and municipal partners. From this perspective, working in conjunction with other levels of government, as well as through lake associations at the volunteer level, a great deal of information can be gathered and shared to not only ensure the safety of persons and property but also to help all Ontarians efficiently and cost effectively deal with various issues that face them including tourism, agricultural, biodiversity, climate change and source water protection.

Further, using both staff and volunteers Conservation Authorities provide many activities throughout the watershed including stewardship, restoration and rehabilitation projects, and provide outreach, education and communication with both municipalities and the public.

Existing Memorandums of Understanding have been signed between conservation authorities and the County (for all municipalities within Lanark County) which helps minimize red tape at the municipal level.

Conservation Authorities are currently being managed by elected representatives and community members from the respective communities within the watershed. It is the choice of the respective Councils whether to appoint Council representatives or community members to manage their interests within the watershed.

The Conservation Authority is aware of the criticism they have received and are currently taking the initiative to review their business processes, training staff and leading through other initiatives to ensure that they are providing efficient and cost-effective service related to their current mandate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS the Corporation of the Town of Carleton Place has been well served by the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) and has representation on the Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS the Corporation of the Town of Carleton Place is an environmentally conscious community; and

WHEREAS the Board of Directors determines the policies, priorities and budget of the MVCA; and

WHEREAS the MVCA provides the Town of Carleton Place with expert advice on the environmental impact of land use planning proposals and the Municipality does not have staff with comparable expertise or experience nor appropriate funding to support the activities currently provided by the MVCA; and

WHEREAS the MVCA provides programs and services to the residents of the Town of Carleton Place which include recreation, education, water quality monitoring, reduction of vegetation loss and soil erosion as well as protecting life and property through a variety of measures;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Corporation of the Town of Carleton Place supports the continuation of the programs and services of the MVCA, both mandatory and non-mandatory, and that no programs of the MVCA or other Conservation Authorities including much needed flood risk reduction programs be dissolved at this time; and

THAT the Town of Carleton Place requests that the Provincial government improve their funding to Conservation Authorities including for flood risk reduction programs in order to provide a more stable funding base that would prevent any downloading of costs to municipalities and their tax base;

THAT the Provincial Government provide clear direction as to what programs and services are considered mandatory and non-mandatory and how those programs will be funded in the future; and

THAT this resolution be forwarded to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Premier Doug Ford, MPP Randy Hillier, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the County of Lanark, the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority, and Conservation Ontario.