



SUBJECT: Support for Ontario's Conservation Authorities

TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.

FROM: Office of the Mayor

Report Number: MO-05-20

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 125-01

Date to Committee: March 9, 2020

Date to Council: March 12, 2020

Recommendation:

Approve the following resolution below and direct the Mayor to send the attached letter (Appendix A) to the ministers and premier:

WHEREAS the City of Burlington is a member of Conservation Halton (CH) and is represented on their Board of Directors;

WHEREAS the municipally appointed board of directors determines the policies, priorities and budget of the CAs;

WHEREAS the City of Burlington has been well-served by Conservation Halton;

WHEREAS the CAs are watershed-based organizations providing programs and services that contribute to a safer, sustainable environment and address climate change

WHEREAS the CAs have flood management programs employing a watershed-based approach that monitors stream flow, water levels and climatic conditions, forecasts flooding, issues flood warnings, regulates development activities in natural hazards, educates the public about flooding, operates flood management infrastructure, protects natural cover and manages storm water to help reduce the impacts of flooding;

WHEREAS the CAs are partners with municipalities in developing the science and policy to manage drinking water source protection;

WHEREAS the CAs own, manage and operate a valuable network of conservation areas that provide access to green space and family-friendly education and recreation activities for our growing communities that inform the public about a wide array of topics including watershed management, wildlife, and Canadian culture and heritage, contributes to the local economy, provides jobs for youth and promotes health and wellness for our residents and provides outdoor experiential education to local school children and encourages communities to embrace and value our natural and scenic assets;

WHEREAS the CAs undertake reforestation and landscape restoration and aid landowners in making changes on their properties in support of naturalization or water quality protection within the watershed;

WHEREAS the CAs provide the Region with technical expertise in support of its planning and infrastructure delivery, education and health programs;

WHEREAS flowing accounts for the largest portion of disaster recovery costs in Canada;

WHEREAS CAs are important partners in on-the-ground and cost-effective initiatives to address climate change;

WHEREAS work by CH on updating floodplain mapping will be beneficial for community development and land use planning, flood forecasting and warnings, and emergency planning and responses;

WHEREAS the role of CAs in reviewing community development is essential for creating sustainable communities and protecting our natural resources;

WHEREAS the Municipality has service agreements with each CA for planning and other services;

WHEREAS the CA must be able to charge fees, and derive revenue from its facilities, programs and services as appropriate to reduce the burden to the tax levy;

AND WHEREAS the Ontario provincial government has cut 50% from their \$7.4 million Natural Hazards Transfer Payment Grant (Section 39) to Ontario conservation

authorities that supports flood and erosion control infrastructure, flood forecasting and warning, watershed planning projects and technical studies, and the new act has the effect of downloading additional responsibilities to the CAs to be paid for by municipalities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Burlington request that the Provincial Government restore or improve their funding of Conservation Authorities to provide a more stable funding base that would prevent further downloading of costs to municipalities and allow maintenance of hazard programs;

THAT Conservation Authorities must continue to oversee flood control and review developmental impacts that may impact flood plains and natural heritage sites;

THAT educational and recreational programming must continue to be implemented by Conservation Authorities as they provide public awareness, employment and tourism;

THAT the Provincial Government ensure that the programs and services of the CAs maintain their watershed focus and allow for the flexibility of including programs and services important to local circumstances;

THAT the Province include experts from Conservation Authorities, staff of the Ministries of Natural Resources and Forestry, Environment Conservation and Parks as well as Municipal Affairs and Housing and municipalities when developing the draft regulations;

THAT the Province not dictate the form, content or duration of the MOUs or agreements, allowing for municipalities to support non-mandatory programs in a manner that suits local circumstances;

AND FURTHER THAT this resolution be forwarded to the Premier, the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, all local MPs and MPPs, leaders of the opposition parties, all local Conservation Authorities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Halton Region, the towns of Oakville, Halton Hills and Milton to seek their support and be made publicly available.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
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Background and Discussion:

The provincial government is working on updates to Conservation Authority regulations. As such, we have an opportunity to express our support for the current functioning of our local CA, Conservation Halton, and the relationship to our city and region. B

Burlington has four representatives serving on the board of CH: two residents (Gerry Smallegange, who serves as the chair of the CH board and is CEO of Burlington Hydro; as well as Jim Sweetlove, who also chairs the board of the CH Foundation) and two members of city council (Mayor Meed Ward, and Councillor Nisan). We can personally attest to the value CH provides not only in flood protection and watershed management, but also self-sustaining and revenue-generating programs that offer unique educational and recreational experiences to bring people into nature.

The resolution provides support for CH while also calling for stable funding and local authority to negotiate MOUs and programs suited to local needs.

Financial Matters:

Not applicable

Total Financial Impact

Not applicable

Source of Funding

Not applicable

Other Resource Impacts

Not applicable

Climate Implications

TBD

Engagement Matters:

Not applicable

Conclusion:

In order to maintain the valued contributions of our local conservation authority, Conservation Halton, and enable them to continue their work in mitigating climate change and flood risk, protecting our greenspace and drinking water, and providing programs that educate the public, it is essential that we communicate our support for their funding and mandate to the provincial government.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward

Appendices:

A. Letter to Minister Yurek re CAs March 2020

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Council. Final approval is by the City Manager.