

Township of Southgate

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Staff Report CAO2020-019

Title of Report: Ministry of Environment Conservation & Parks –
Conservation Authority Act Public Consultation

Department: Administration

Council Date: March 4, 2020

Council Recommendation:

Be it resolved that Council receive staff report CAO2020-019 as information.

Background:

The Ministry of Environment, Conservation & Parks held a Conservation Authorities Act Public Consultation meeting on February 14th, 2020 in London, Ontario.

Staff Comments:

The purpose of this staff report is to update Council on the discussions at the Ministry of Environment, Conservation & Parks Public Consultation event on the Conservation Authorities Act session attended by the CAO on February 14th, 2020 in London, Ontario. There were in excess of 300 people in attendance from all over South-Western Ontario.

The meeting was opened with an address from Minister Jeff Yurek, followed by the organizations that provided positions and opinions representing their organization and/or members. The consultation presentations included Conservation Ontario, AMO, Ducks Unlimited, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Home Builders, Ontario Cottage Owners Association and EnPointe Development Inc., a company that focuses on citizen advocacy and research.

About half of the time for the consultation meeting was later spent answering a list of questions provided by the Ministry, through assigned table discussions, lead by a MECP staff member. This was a very informative session and quickly evolved into everyone (municipally) having the same or common concerns with Conservation Authorities (CA), regardless of where they were from. The common issues in the discussions were:

- The quality of the CA Mapping used should be the same across the Province;
- CA Governance, is this right model;
- CA have too much power, with the odd person saying they should be disbanded;
- There needs to be a review of CA guidance and governance rules;

- Conservation Authorities need defined timelines for responses and issuing of permits they must follow like the issuance on building permits requirements;
- Permitting fees charged should be on a cost recovery basis and not as a revenue generation opportunity for CA;
- Should look at small CA's and consider amalgamation to create efficiency of operations;
- The operation of the CA over the years has been a downloading exercise by the Province, with the most recent example being Source Water Protection costs burdened by municipalities and its ratepayers when urban areas receive the benefits.
- Conservation Authority operating costs should spread across equally based on population, urban and rural, since protecting wetlands is managing the security of drinking water sources.
- CA need the equivalent of the PPS document for planners so that Conservation Authority staff have access to consistent definitions, directives and the conservation roadmap to adhere to the same rules; and
- There should be a Conservation Authority Operations Audit requirement, to ensure CA processes and deliverables are adhered to consistently across the Province.

CA operational suggestions for the future:

- Have the same CA staff person assigned to a municipality for all applications;
- CA staff should be involved early on in development meetings to better understand the scope of projects; and
- The CA staff should adopt a one window approach as a partner with municipalities in providing timely delivery of services.

Financial Impact or Long-Term Implications

There is no financial impact to the municipality as a result of this report in the 2020 budget.

Communications & Community Action Plan Impact:

This report has been written and presented to Council to communicate accurate information to the public.

Concluding Comments:

1. That Council receive this staff report as information.

Respectfully Submitted,

CAO approval: Original Signed By

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