

September 3, 2019

Minister Jeff Yurek
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Yurek:

Thank you for your letter sent August 16, 2019, in which you request Conservation Authorities to begin preparations and planning to wind down activities that may fall outside the scope of a core mandate and to not proceed with any increases to our fees and levies while this review is underway. We also acknowledge having received a copy of the August 23, 2019 email you sent to Kim Gavine at Conservation Ontario, in which you further clarify your request.

Our Board held a Special Board Meeting on August 28, 2019 to consider the content of your correspondence and determine a pathway forward for the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority.

At this time, the Board believes it is premature to make any substantive decisions about winding down programs and services that are currently delivered by the Authority. We believe that the type of analysis and planning that you are requesting should only occur after the province has provided clarity on the scope, requirements, and standards for the mandatory programs and services as identified in the legislation. With this clarity, the Authority will then be able to better understand the remaining “other” programs and services and undertake the consultation with our municipalities, as contemplated in the transition provisions outlined in the legislation. Meanwhile, we will begin a conversation with our member municipalities to confirm our understanding of what might be considered to be “municipal” programs and services.

We have also considered your request that we not proceed with any increases to our levy or fees. As you know, Conservation Authorities are attempting to accommodate the shortfall in provincial funding due to the reduction in provincial transfer payments for mandatory or core programs and services; this represents a 3% reduction in revenue, which must be accommodated in part by offsetting revenue from other sources. The Board has directed staff to prepare a responsible budget to deal with the known financial pressures, which could include an increase in levy and fees.

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Finally, we agree with your suggestion that effective engagement with our municipal members is critical as this process unfolds. The Board has directed staff to enhance its engagement with municipal officials as they prepare the draft 2020 budget.

We look forward to participating in your consultation efforts on the upcoming regulations. Thank you for your correspondence on this matter.

Sincerely,



Andy Mitchell
Chair

Cc: Minister Laurie Scott
MPP David Smith
MPP David Piccini
Mayors of Member Municipalities