



Nottawasaga Valley
Conservation Authority

Mayor and Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains
32 Mill Street
Thornbury, Ontario
N0H 2P0

February 28, 2025

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) Board of Directors regarding Oro-Medonte's recent resolution proposing the amalgamation of the NVCA and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) under section 11 of the *Conservation Authorities Act, 1990*.

Following careful deliberation with our Board, and discussion with the Chair and CAO of the LSRCA, it is the position of the NVCA Board that a formal amalgamation is neither necessary nor advisable. (Our resolution to that effect is enclosed.)

Let me outline why our Board has taken this position:

To date, no independent, expert analysis has been presented to demonstrate that amalgamation would improve efficiency or service delivery. On the contrary, experience has shown that larger municipal entities often result in increased costs, governance challenges, operational inefficiencies and a loss of local focus.

Further, NVCA and LSRCA serve distinct watersheds with unique ecological, planning and regulatory frameworks. While some municipalities are within both Authorities, the vast majority of NVCA member municipalities have little in common with the Lake Simcoe watershed. Additionally, the LSRCA has distinct responsibilities under the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*, which highlights the unique challenges of that watershed. A single, combined Authority could dilute focus and reduce responsiveness to local needs, given the new entity would span a very large geographic area.

Rather than pursuing an amalgamation process—one that would inevitably lead to debates over jurisdiction, governance and composition—the NVCA Board is focused on delivering meaningful improvements that address the concerns of our municipal partners. Our goal is to enhance service delivery, streamline permitting and development processes, and maintain a strong commitment to protecting people and property from natural hazards under Ontario law.

This work is already well underway under the leadership of our Interim CAO. I would like to highlight several initiatives that directly respond to the issues raised by our stakeholders and members:

- Operational Accountability: We have implemented a new monthly reporting system for development and permitting applications to the Chair and Vice-Chair to ensure heightened accountability and service improvement.
- Process Review and Best Practices: We are undertaking a comprehensive audit of our development-application processes to identify opportunities for greater efficiency. As part of this review, we are working collaboratively with LSRCA and other Authorities to share best practices and standardize processes where appropriate.
- Improving Consistency Between NVCA and Other Conservation Authorities: Recognizing that some municipalities are subject to both authorities' regulations, we are committed to aligning our review processes to ensure they are as consistent and predictable as possible.
- Customer Service Improvements: We are updating our customer-service policy and will provide additional staff training to enhance responsiveness and efficiency.

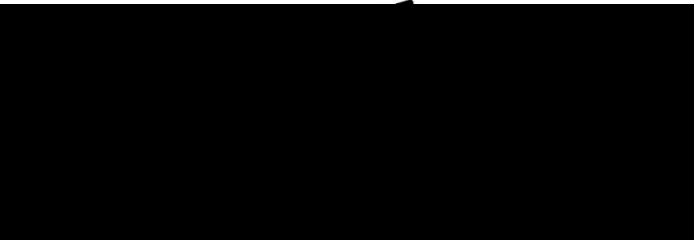
You may view more about this action plan in the enclosed staff report presented to our board.

These measures are practical, targeted and achievable. They will result in tangible improvements without the disruption, expense and uncertainty that an amalgamation process would bring.

The NVCA Board remains committed to continuous improvement and collaboration with our municipal partners. We welcome your feedback as we pursue these important initiatives and remain open to further discussions on how we can best support your community's needs.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our Interim CAO, Sheryl Flannagan at sflannagan@nvca.on.ca, if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Scott
Chair, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

cc

Mayors and Councils within the LSRCA and NVCA
LSRCA Board
Conservation Ontario Council



NOTTAWASAGA VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING NO. 02-25-BOD
February 28, 2025

Agenda Item#: 13.4.1

Resolution#: 18-25

MOVED BY: Cllr. June Porter

SECONDED BY: Mayor Gary Harvey

WHEREAS: the Board of Directors is in receipt of correspondence from Oro-Medonte Council that seeks to start the amalgamation process between the NVCA and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) as outlined in Section 11 of the Conservation Authorities Act; and

WHEREAS: NVCA and LSRCA serve distinct and separate watersheds, each with unique ecological, planning and regulatory considerations, including LSRCA's additional responsibilities under the Lake Simcoe Protection Act; and

WHEREAS: no independent, expert analysis has been conducted to determine whether an amalgamation would improve efficiency and service delivery or whether it may instead result in increased costs, governance challenges, operational inefficiencies or dilution of focus on the needs of the individual watersheds; and

WHEREAS: Conservation Ontario has generally supported maintaining the current structure of thirty-six Conservation Authorities across Ontario, recognizing the value of locally focused watershed management; and

WHEREAS: the NVCA is actively collaborating with other Conservation Authorities and through a customer centric focus, has been making improvements to processes and procedures, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED: that the NVCA Board of Directors opposes the proposed amalgamation of NVCA and the LSRCA, as it has not been demonstrated that such a change would benefit watershed management, municipalities or the public; and

FURTHER THAT: the Board supports continued and enhanced collaboration between NVCA, Conservation Ontario, and other Conservation Authorities to standardize processes and procedures where feasible, particularly to assist development and permit applicants whose activities fall within municipalities that straddle multiple watersheds; and

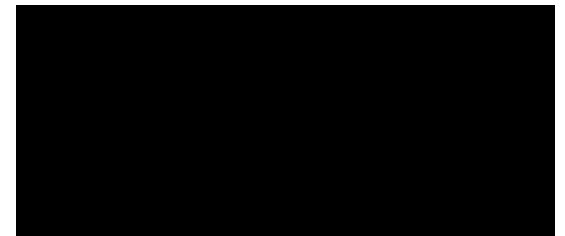
FURTHER THAT: remains committed to working constructively with Oro-Medonte and all NVCA member municipalities to address and resolve any challenges, including planning and permitting, in a fair, transparent and efficient manner; and



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FURTHER THAT: a copy of this resolution with a letter from the Chair be sent to all NVCA and LSRCA member municipalities, the LSRCA Board and Conservation Ontario Council.

- Carried Unanimously
- Approved by Consent
- Defeated
- Tabled
- Deferred until _____



NVCA Chair



Staff Report: 04-02-25-BOD

Date: 28/02/2025

To: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors

From: Sheryl Flannagan
Interim Chief Administrative Officer/Director, Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Interim CAO Workplan

Recommendation

RESOLVED THAT: the Board of Directors receive Staff Report No. 04-02-25-BOD regarding the Interim CAO workplan.

Purpose of the Staff Report

The purpose of this Staff Report is to update the Board on the Interim CAO's workplan during this transitional period and to update the Board on progress and commitments moving forward.

Background

The NVCA is going through a transformative time with the departure of the previous CAO and the upcoming recruitment of a new CAO. To ensure stability and continuity, the Interim CAO has implemented a focused workplan that addresses current challenges while positioning the organization for success under new leadership.

Issues/Analysis

The following is a list of the four key priorities and commitments.

1. Strengthening Municipal relationships

The Interim CAO, Chair, and Vice-Chair have prioritized engaging with partner municipalities to foster collaboration and address concerns. To date, meetings have been held with Wasaga Beach, New Tecumseth, and Oro-Medonte, with a meeting scheduled with Springwater on February 26th. Additionally, the Chair has issued an introductory letter inviting all partner municipalities to share any concerns or ideas with the NVCA.

Progress to Date:

- Engaged with four municipalities to discuss development priorities and address concerns
- Implemented a 48-hour response protocol for issues raised by municipal partners
- Issued a Chair's introductory letter inviting all municipalities to meet or connect with the NVCA

Continued Commitment:

Goal – Meet with any municipality that expresses interest in engaging with the NVCA

Next Steps – Continue outreach to municipalities and respond promptly to all requests for meetings.

Outcome – Strengthen municipal partnerships and identify opportunities for process improvements based on their feedback.

2. Restoring and Enforcing Customer Service Standards

The NVCA's customer service strategy and charter, implemented in 2013, lapsed in practice due to high workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic. In January 2025, the Interim CAO reinstated compliance with the customer service strategy and reminded all staff of their obligations to meet service standards. A copy of the strategy is attached (see attachment #1).

Progress to Date:

- Customer Service Strategy compliance was reinstated in January 2025
- All staff have been instructed to comply with service timelines as outlined in the charter

Continued Commitment:

Goal – Achieve full compliance with the Customer Service Strategy within Q1 2025

Next Steps – Review customer service strategy compliance with senior staff on a monthly basis and identify any issues of concern

Reporting – Provide progress updates to the Board at the end of Q2 and again at year-end

Outcome – Improve response times and enhance customer satisfaction

3. Evaluating Planning, Permitting, and Engineering processes

The NVCA recognizes the need for a comprehensive evaluation of planning, permitting, and engineering process to ensure efficiency and alignment with legislative changes. The Interim CAO is currently consulting with other CAO's to identify the best approach for this review.

Progress to Date:

- Initiated discussions with other conservation authorities to evaluate process review options
- Solicited recommendations for consultants experienced in conservation authority process evaluations.

Continued Commitment:

Goal – Initiate an external process review by March 31, 2025

Next Steps – Select a consultant or peer conservation authority(s) to conduct the review and set a clear timeline for completion

Outcome – Identify inefficiencies, streamline workflows and enhance service delivery

4. Developing a backlog reduction strategy for Planning, Permitting, and Engineering

The NVCA is exploring immediate and long-term solutions to address the backlog in planning, permitting and engineering files. While process improvements from item 3 will drive long-term efficiency, short-term solutions are also under review.

Progress to Date:

- Considering third-party consultants to expedite peer reviews, but cost estimates (approximately \$100,000) raise concerns due to budget constraints

- Exploring internal measures to reduce workload on engineering staff without compromising service standards

Continued Commitment:

Goal – Present a backlog reduction strategy to the Board by the March 2025 meeting

Next Steps – Conclude process review from item 3 to identify internal efficiencies, investigate phased or capped use of consultants if internal measures are insufficient, and provide the Board with a cost-benefit analysis before committing significant funds to peer reviews.

Outcome – Reduce backlog while maintaining fiscal responsibility and service standards.

Relevance to Authority Policy/Mandate

The workplan directly supports the NVCA’s mandate under the *Conservation Authorities Act* by ensuring efficient operations, enhancing customer service and fostering productive relationships with partner municipalities.

Impact on Authority Finances

Staff time to prepare this report is addressed in the 2025 budget. Any additional costs related to external consultants for process reviews or backlog reduction will be brought to the Board for approval with a clear cost-benefit analysis.

Climate Change Implications

There are no climate change implications related to this report.

Reviewed by:
Original Signed by
Sheryl Flannagan
Interim Chief Administrative Officer/
Director, Corporate Services

Approved for submission by:
Original Signed by
Sheryl Flannagan
Interim Chief Administrative Officer/
Director Corporate Services

Attachment #1 – Customer Service Strategy