

Hamilton Conservation Authority Client Service Standards Commitment

Board of Directors Approved September 5, 2019

Background

Under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, the Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) has a mandate to protect life and property from natural hazards such as flooding and erosion, to prevent environmental degradation and loss of natural features and their ecological and hydrological functions, and to prevent pollution of natural features and watercourses. To accomplish this, HCA undertakes a wide range of programs and services.

In the planning and development process, HCA exercises its roles and responsibilities in accordance with the Province's *Policies and Procedures for Conservation Authority Plan Review and Permitting Activities (2010)*, including:

- a regulatory agency under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*;
- a body with delegated authority, under the *Provincial Policy Statement*, to represent the 'Provincial Interest' regarding natural hazards in the review of municipal policy documents and planning applications under the *Planning Act*;
- a public commenting body under the *Planning Act* and other Acts and Provincial Plans;
- a service provider for environmental advice and technical clearance to municipalities in accordance with signed *Memoranda of Agreement*; and
- a resource management agency operating on a local watershed basis.

Pursuant to *Ontario Regulation 161/06*, HCA regulates:

- all development in or adjacent to river or stream valleys, wetlands and surrounding lands where development could interfere with the hydrologic function of the wetland, Lake Ontario shorelines, and hazardous lands such as karst and any prescribed allowances;
- alterations to a river, creek, stream or watercourse; and
- interference with wetlands.

Permission is required from HCA for undertaking any works within regulated areas. Any development, which in the opinion of the HCA does not affect the control of flooding, erosion, pollution, conservation of land, or dynamic beaches may be approved or approved with conditions. Interference to watercourses and wetlands may be approved, approved with conditions or refused. HCA's Board-approved *Planning & Regulation Policies and Guidelines (2011)* document outlines the policies and technical requirements which must be met before permission may be granted. As part of a HCA permit application, an applicant must demonstrate that HCA's Board-approved policies and technical standards can be met.



HCA provides planning advisory services to watershed municipalities through Memoranda of Agreement or Understanding (MOA or MOU). Staff provides technical input regarding potential environmental impacts and advice about how damaging impacts can be avoided or reduced and/or how opportunities for restoring or improving environmental features and functions can be realized. Comments apply to a range of matters including but not limited to natural hazards, natural heritage, and water quality and quantity. Policy documents and planning applications are circulated to HCA for review and input under the *Planning Act*.

These applications typically include:

- Official Plans and Official Plan Amendments
- Secondary/Area Plans and Infrastructure Master Plans
- Zoning By-laws and Zoning By-law Amendments
- Plans of Subdivision and Condominium
- Consents (severances and lot-line adjustments) and Minor Variances
- Site Plans

HCA staff (i.e., environmental planners, regulation officers, ecologists and water resource engineers) work together to deliver timely and comprehensive reviews and advice to provincial agencies, municipalities and landowners across HCA's watershed jurisdiction.

Our Commitment

Our commitment to client service is an important element of the planning and regulations programs.

For permit applications, we will:

- Return phone calls and inquiries within one business day;
- Encourage pre-consultation with applicants and ensure that all HCA application requirements are clear and understood by applicants;
- Provide clear submission guidelines for technical studies and reports;
- Provide regulatory screening maps to the public;
- Keep applicants for permits under Ontario Regulation 162/06 informed regarding the status of their application;
- Provide timely reviews and approvals;
- Track review and approval times for specific permits;
- Work toward on-line permit submissions; and
- Seek continuous process improvements.



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Further, our targets are to:

- Notify applicants within 21 days regarding the completeness of their permit application;
- Review technical documents/submissions within 3 - 4 weeks;
- Approve minor permits that meet policy requirements within 30 days; and
- Approve major permits that meet policy requirements within 90 days.

For planning applications, we will:

- Return phone calls and inquiries within one business day;
- Work with municipal staff to streamline plan review processes;
- Participate actively in pre-consultation meetings;
- Provide clear submission guidelines for technical studies and reports;
- Provide timely reviews of applications and technical studies;
- Track files and review times for specific applications; and
- Seek continuous process improvements with municipalities.

Further, our targets are to:

- Review technical documents/submissions within 3 - 4 weeks;
- Provide comments on planning applications according to the to municipalities by the specified date due or within the time frames specified in agreements; and
- Review technical documents/submissions and provide technical comments according to the MOA to municipalities within 4 weeks.

For public information and transparency, we will post the following to the HCA website:

- CA/Municipal MOA Agreement
 - City of Hamilton
 - County of Wellington
- CA plan review and regulation approvals policies/guidelines
 - *Planning & Regulation Policies and Guidelines (2011)*
- CA Complete application requirements
- Current CA Fee policies and schedules
- CA Online screening maps
- CA Annual report on review timelines

For Issue Management on planning and permit files, we will apply the following protocol:

- The Watershed Planner or Watershed Officer responsible for the file will work to resolve file issues by working with the municipality/ applicant to find solutions which are supported by HCA policies and MOAs;



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- If a resolution is not achieved, the Manager, Watershed Planning Services or Deputy Chief Administrative Officer/Director, Watershed Planning and Engineering will act to resolve the issue.
- If a decision on a permit application has not been rendered by the HCA within the appropriate timeframe (i.e., 30 days for minor applications / 90 days for major applications), the applicant can submit a request for administrative review by CAO and then if not satisfied, by the HCA Board of Directors.