



Board of Directors

Addendum

February 5, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting will be in-person only

**All meetings can be viewed live on HCA's You Tube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/HamiltonConservation>**

7. Consent Items for Applications, Minutes and Correspondence

- 7.4 Email Correspondence Regarding ERO, 025-1257, Changes to the Conservation Authorities' Act, labeled item an.

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Township of Champlain

Resolution
Regular Council Meeting

Agenda Number: 15.1.
Resolution Number 2026-034
Title: South Nation Conservation - Proposed Amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act and ERO Posting
Date: January 29, 2026

Moved By: Gérard Miner
Seconded By: Peter Barton

Whereas the *Conservation Authorities Act* (1946) enables municipalities to establish Conservation Authorities and appoint locally elected representatives to their Boards, ensuring direct municipal oversight and accountability for programs funded by municipal taxpayers; and

Whereas the municipalities within the South Nation River watershed established South Nation Conservation (SNC) in 1947 to protect people, property, farmland, water resources, and natural systems through a watershed-based model that reflects local geographic, hydrologic, and community needs; and

Whereas municipalities within the SNC jurisdiction currently provide between 25% and 50% of total funding for conservation authority operations, while provincial funding has declined to approximately 3% in recent years; and

Whereas SNC delivers essential services that support municipal responsibilities, including:

- natural hazard identification and permitting;
- watershed planning and development review;
- flood forecasting, emergency management, and low water response;
- drinking water source protection;
- watershed monitoring, reporting, and technical studies;
- sustainable forestry, agricultural stewardship, and restoration programs;
- management of over 13,000 acres of conservation lands, including lands donated by residents and managed through municipal service agreements; and

Whereas on November 7, 2025, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks posted ERO #025-1257 proposing to consolidate Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities into seven regional conservation authorities and to establish a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, with limited consultation and without accompanying cost-benefit analysis or evidence demonstrating the need for this restructuring; and

Whereas Schedule 3 of Bill 68 enables the Province to assume governance authority over regional conservation authorities, raising concerns regarding diminished municipal representation, loss of local decision-making, and centralization of watershed management; and

Whereas municipalities in Eastern Ontario have expressed concern, including the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, that restructuring may:

- increase red tape and administrative burden;
- impose significant transition costs for HR, IT, land transfers, and governance realignment;
- dilute rural voices within large regional agencies dominated by major urban centres;
- erode donor confidence and affect the stewardship of thousands of acres of locally donated lands;
- disrupt bilingual service delivery in designated municipalities governed by the *French Language Services Act*; and

Whereas Conservation Authorities—including SNC—already collaborate regionally through successful shared-service models, joint watershed studies, coordinated flood forecasting, agricultural stewardship partnerships, digital permitting, and harmonized technical reviews, demonstrating that modernization and efficiency can be achieved without dismantling local governance structures; and

Whereas municipalities rely on SNC’s field-based expertise, rapid on-site support, landowner relationships, and local knowledge—services that risk being weakened under a large, centralized regional structure;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Champlain urges the Government of Ontario to maintain local, municipally governed, watershed-based Conservation Authorities, including South Nation Conservation, to ensure effective natural resource and natural hazard management, transparent local services, and accountability for municipal levy dollars; and

Be it further resolved that this Council does not support the proposed consolidation boundaries presented in ERO #025-1257 or the creation of a new provincial Conservation Agency without evidence-based analysis, transparent consultation, and clear articulation of impacts to municipal budgets, local service delivery, donor lands, and bilingual obligations; and

Be it further resolved that this Council encourages the Province to work collaboratively with municipalities and Conservation Authorities to identify opportunities for improved consistency, modernization, and shared-service approaches within the existing watershed governance model; and

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to:

- the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks;
- local MPPs and MPs;
- all municipalities within the South Nation Watershed;
- the Association of Municipalities of Ontario;
- the Rural Ontario Municipal Association;
- Conservation Ontario; and
- all Conservation Authorities in Ontario.

Carried

Certified True Copy of Resolution

Alison Collard, Clerk Date:

No. du point à l'ordre du jour: 15.1.
No. du point 2026-034
Titre: Conservation de la Nation Sud - Modification proposée, Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature et à l'Avis au Registre environnemental
Date: le 29 janvier 2026

Proposée par : Gérard Miner

Appuyée par : Peter Barton

Attendu que la *Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature* (1946) permet aux municipalités de créer des offices de protection de la nature et de nommer des représentants élus localement à leur Conseil d'administration, garantissant ainsi une surveillance directe et une responsabilité municipale pour les programmes financés par les contribuables municipaux ; et

Attendu que les municipalités du bassin versant de la rivière Nation Sud ont créé la Conservation de la Nation Sud (CNS) en 1947 afin de protéger les personnes, les biens, les terres agricoles, les ressources en eau et les systèmes naturels grâce à un modèle basé sur le bassin versant qui reflète les besoins géographiques, hydrologiques et communautaires locaux ; et

Attendu que les municipalités relevant du territoire de la CNS fournissent actuellement entre 25 % et 50 % du financement total des activités de l'Office de protection de la nature, tandis que le financement provincial a diminué pour atteindre environ 3 % ces dernières années ; et

Attendu que la CNS fournit des services essentiels qui soutiennent les responsabilités municipales, notamment :

- l'identification des risques naturels et la délivrance de permis ;
- la planification du bassin versant et l'examen des projets d'aménagement ;
- la prévision des inondations, la gestion des urgences et les interventions en cas de crue ;
- la protection des sources d'eau potable ;
- la surveillance des bassins versants, l'établissement de rapports et les études techniques ;
- les programmes de foresterie durable, de gestion agricole et de restauration ;
- la gestion de plus de 13 000 acres de terres de conservation, y compris les terres données par les résidents et gérées dans le cadre d'ententes de services municipaux ; et

Attendu que le 7 novembre 2025, le ministère de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs a publié le document Registre environnemental #025-1257 025-1257 proposant de regrouper les 36 offices de protection de la nature de l'Ontario en sept offices régionaux et de créer une nouvelle agence provinciale de protection de la nature de l'Ontario, après une consultation limitée et sans analyse coûts-avantages ni preuves démontrant la nécessité de cette restructuration ; et

Attendu que l'annexe 3 du projet de loi 68 permet à la province d'assumer le pouvoir de gouvernance sur les offices régionaux de protection de la nature, ce qui soulève des inquiétudes quant à la diminution de la représentation municipale, à la perte du pouvoir décisionnel local et à la centralisation de la gestion des bassins

versants ; et

Attendu que les municipalités de l'Est de l'Ontario, notamment les comtés unis de Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry, ont exprimé leur inquiétude quant au fait que la restructuration pourrait :

- augmenter la bureaucratie et le fardeau administratif ;
- imposer des coûts de transition importants pour les ressources humaines, les technologies de l'information, les transferts fonciers et le réalignement de la gouvernance ;
- diluer la voix des zones rurales au sein des grandes agences régionales dominées par les grands centres urbains ;
- éroder la confiance des donateurs et affecter la gestion de milliers d'hectares de terres données localement ;
- perturber la prestation de services bilingues dans les municipalités désignées régies par la *Loi sur les services en langue française* ; et

Attendu que les offices de protection de la nature, y compris la CNS, collaborent déjà à l'échelle régionale grâce à des modèles de services partagés efficaces, des études conjointes sur les bassins versants, la coordination des prévisions d'inondations, des partenariats en matière de gestion agricole, la délivrance de permis numériques et des examens techniques harmonisés, démontrant ainsi que la modernisation et l'efficacité peuvent être réalisées sans démanteler les structures de gouvernance locales ; et

Attendu que les municipalités comptent sur l'expertise de terrain de la CNS, son soutien rapide sur place, ses relations avec les propriétaires fonciers et sa connaissance du terrain, autant de services qui risquent d'être affaiblis dans le cadre d'une grande structure régionale centralisée ;

Il est donc résolu que le Conseil municipal du Corporation du Canton de Champlain exhorte le gouvernement de l'Ontario à maintenir les offices de protection de la nature locaux, gérés par les municipalités et basés sur les bassins versants, y compris la Conservation de la Nation Sud, afin de garantir une gestion efficace des ressources naturelles et des risques naturels, des services locaux transparents et la responsabilité des fonds municipaux prélevés ; et

De plus, qu'il soit résolu que le Conseil ne soutient pas les limites de consolidation proposées dans le document Registre environnemental #025-1257 ni la création d'une nouvelle agence provinciale de conservation sans analyse fondée sur des preuves, consultation transparente et articulation claire des répercussions sur les budgets municipaux, la prestation de services locaux, les terres données et les obligations bilingues ; et

De plus, qu'il soit résolu que ce Conseil encourage la province à collaborer avec les municipalités et les offices de protection de la nature afin d'identifier les possibilités d'améliorer la cohérence, la modernisation et les approches de services partagés dans le cadre du modèle actuel de gouvernance des bassins versants ; et

De plus, qu'il soit résolu que une copie de cette résolution soit envoyée à :

- le ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs ;
- les députés provinciaux et fédéraux locaux ;
- toutes les municipalités du bassin versant de la Nation Sud ;
- l'Association des municipalités de l'Ontario ;
- l'Association des municipalités rurales de l'Ontario ;
- Conservation Ontario ; et
- toutes les autorités de conservation de l'Ontario.

Copie certifiée conforme

Alison Collard, greffière Date :

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November 24, 2025

Township of Champlain

Dear Mayor Normand Riopel, CAO Kevin Tessier and Council,

Re: Proposed Amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and ERO Posting #025-1257 – Request for Municipal Support

On behalf of the South Nation Conservation (SNC) Board of Directors, I am writing to share our Statement on the Ontario’s proposal to amend the *Conservation Authorities Act* and consolidate Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities into 7 regional agencies.

SNC has proudly served your municipality since 1947, operating as a locally governed, municipal partnership designed to protect people, property, farmland, and natural systems. Today, municipalities fund the vast majority of SNC’s programs and services, while provincial contributions have declined to approximately 3% of SNC’s annual operating budget. This reality underscores the importance of maintaining strong local decision-making, oversight, and accountability for services funded primarily through municipal levy dollars.

Our Board is deeply concerned that the proposed regional restructuring—including the creation of a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency—would significantly reduce local municipal representation, weaken watershed-based decision-making, and diminish the responsiveness and local service delivery that Eastern Ontario communities rely on.

We support provincial goals related to consistency, modernization, and digital permitting; however, these improvements can all be achieved without dismantling the current locally governed model, which has protected communities for nearly 80 years.

We respectfully request that your Council consider adopting the attached draft Resolution, which aligns closely with SDG Counties position, and reinforces the importance of maintaining:

- Local governance and rural representation
- Municipal oversight of levy-funded programs
- Local stewardship of donor lands and municipal conservation properties
- Trusted partnerships for emergencies, planning review, and agricultural support

Your voice is critical. Municipal leadership created conservation authorities, fund the majority of their operations, and have decades of established partnership with SNC. A strong municipal response will ensure that any provincial changes are evidence-based, transparent, and respect the unique needs of Eastern Ontario.

We welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss these proposed changes and their implications. SNC will also be submitting comments to the Environmental Registry by the December 22, 2025.

Thank you for your leadership and continued support.

Sincerely,

Steve Densham
Chair, Board of Directors
South Nation Conservation





SNC Responds to Provincial Proposal to Restructure Conservation Authorities

**Conservation Authorities Were Created “For the People, By the People” —
SNC Highlights Importance of Local Governance and Community Accountability**

November 24, 2025

South Nation Conservation (SNC) is reviewing the Province of Ontario’s proposal to amend the *Conservation Authorities Act* and consolidate Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities into seven regional bodies overseen by a new provincial agency (ERO Posting #025-1257). The Environmental Registry consultation is open until December 22, 2025.

This proposal represents the most significant change to Ontario’s environmental management system in 80 years.

Conservation Authorities were established as locally governed, watershed-based agencies — created by municipalities, funded by municipalities, and accountable to municipalities. They were founded on the principle that natural resources must be managed at the watershed scale, because drainage, flooding, erosion, and water quality follow watershed boundaries — not administrative borders.

Historically, the Province funded up to 50% of Conservation Authority operations; today, provincial support has fallen to roughly 3%, leaving municipalities to fund the majority of watershed services. SNC is concerned that the proposed restructuring would shift governance away from the municipalities who created and fund Conservation Authorities, resulting in a significant loss of local decision-making, community accountability, and rural representation.

While SNC supports provincial goals to improve consistency and modernize digital permitting, these objectives can be achieved without removing local governance or amalgamating watershed agencies into large provincial structures.

SNC Services Continue Without Disruption

SNC continues to deliver all watershed programs across its 4,480 km² jurisdiction, including:

- natural hazard management and permitting
- watershed planning and development review
- flood forecasting and low water response
- drinking water source protection
- forestry, restoration, and stewardship programs
- agricultural support and cost-share programs
- management of over 13,000 acres of conservation lands

Conservation Authorities are the only environmental agencies with boots on-the-ground providing natural resource management, local monitoring, site visits, emergency response, and technical expertise to municipalities, landowners, and farm families.





Proposal Lacks Transparency – SNC Supports Timely Sustainable Development

SNC is concerned about the limited information provided to support the restructuring proposal. Municipalities and Indigenous communities received minimal advance notice, no cost-benefit analysis or transition plan has been released, and the proposal offers no clarity on how land transfers, municipal service agreements, risk management offices, or emergency response roles would function.

The ERO posting also does not reference Bill 68 (Schedule 3) — the legislation enabling consolidation — making it difficult for the public to understand the full scope of changes.

Despite claims of inefficiency, SNC issues over 98% of permits within provincial timelines, and provincial reports, including the Province’s Housing Affordability Task Force Report, do not identify Conservation Authorities as barriers to housing or development.

SNC also demonstrates how shared-service delivery models can reduce municipal costs and improve service quality: SNC delivers Ontario Building Code: Part 8 sewage system permitting on behalf of 16 municipalities, issuing 100% of permits within required timelines, with an average review period of just 9 days.

SNC plays an essential role in helping municipalities meet their development targets: 100% of planning reviews and development-related screenings are completed within municipal timelines, and SNC staff work directly with municipal planners, developers, and property owners to resolve issues early, reduce delays, and support local economic growth.

In 2023, the Province removed Conservation Authorities’ ability to provide natural heritage reviews and hydrogeological services for municipalities. This change has not worked for rural Ontario, forcing municipalities to hire private consultants at higher cost, with longer timelines, and with less local knowledge — undermining the coordinated, affordable service model that previously supported rural development.

Donor Lands and Municipal Properties Must Remain Locally Stewarded

Much of SNC’s land base was donated by local residents and farm families with the expectation of permanent, local stewardship. Transferring these properties to a distant regional authority raises concerns regarding:

- charitable trust obligations
- donor intent
- *Income Tax Act* requirements
- municipal conservation land agreements
- conservation easements and bequests

Maintaining donor confidence is essential to sustaining long-term conservation partnerships in Eastern Ontario.



Bilingual Service Obligations Must Be Protected

SNC is the only bilingual Conservation Authority in Southern Ontario, serving municipalities designated under the *French Language Services Act*. Any restructuring must ensure continued access to bilingual services and avoid downloading new bilingual obligations onto municipalities that do not operate in both official languages. Integrating SNC into a larger region risks weakening bilingual service quality and increasing local administrative costs.

Watershed-Based Management Must Be Preserved

Eastern Ontario's unique hydrology and geology — including the Casselman-to-Lemieux Potential Retrogressive Landslide Area and sensitive Leda clay plains — require specialized management rather than “consistency” delivered from distant regional offices. Effective watershed management depends on local policies that reflect local conditions and realities.

SNC is part of the Ottawa Conservation Partners with Rideau Valley and Mississippi Valley Conservation Authorities, working seamlessly with the City of Ottawa to align planning reviews, environmental monitoring, and stewardship delivery on private property.

SNC also delivers specialized agricultural stewardship programs built around local soils, farm practices, and long-standing relationships. These programs are not universally delivered across the province, but they are essential in SNC's region, where agriculture represents the largest land base and a major economic driver. These tailored services risk being diminished under a broad, standardized regional model.

Restructuring Would Increase Costs and Disrupt Services

Large-scale consolidation would require major transitions in governance, staffing, IT systems, land and asset transfers, and municipal agreements — diverting resources away from frontline watershed programs.

SNC also emphasizes its strong support for Conservation Ontario, the network agency for Conservation Authorities. Municipalities are concerned that their locally raised tax dollars may be redirected away from Conservation Ontario and toward establishing a new provincial agency — costs that should be borne by the Province, not municipalities.

Since 2020, Conservation Authorities have already undergone substantial regulatory and administrative change, including new provincial regulations (O. Reg. 41/24), mandatory municipal service agreements, and governance policy updates. Layering full consolidation on top of these recent changes would significantly increase administrative burden, slow response times, and reduce service quality during a period of escalating climate-driven natural hazards.

Many smaller Conservation Authorities — much like small municipalities — would genuinely benefit from consolidation or enhanced shared-service models. These organizations should be the Province's focus, not restructuring large, high-performing Conservation Authorities that already deliver efficient, coordinated local services.



Modernization Can Continue Without Structural Reform

SNC welcomes modernization efforts, including the introduction of a new online provincial permitting portal to improve transparency and customer service.

There are also meaningful opportunities for shared-service solutions — such as modern IT systems, digital infrastructure, and information management — that could improve efficiency across Conservation Authorities.

These improvements can be implemented within Ontario's current watershed-based model. Structural amalgamation is not required and would weaken the municipal relationships necessary to deliver effective watershed management.

SNC's Position Remains Clear

SNC and its member municipalities will be submitting comments with Conservation Ontario to the Province and encourage community partners and residents to provide input before December 22, 2025, at: <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/025-1257>.

Modernization must not come at the expense of:

- local accountability and decision-making
- rural representation
- watershed-based science and natural hazard expertise
- donor trust and municipal land agreements
- agricultural partnerships and on-the-ground service delivery
- bilingual service obligations
- community safety and emergency response capacity

SNC remains committed to protecting people and property, supporting municipalities and landowners, safeguarding drinking water, restoring natural systems, and delivering high-quality watershed services across Eastern Ontario.

Healthy watersheds are the foundation of healthy communities and strong local economies. SNC supports the Province's goal of improving service delivery, strengthening natural hazard management, and enhancing digital permitting tools to help streamline the development process. We encourage the government to build on the significant strengths already present within Ontario's Conservation Authority system, rather than replacing them, by investing in modernization, supporting local capacity, and ensuring sustainable provincial funding.

Given that it already takes over an hour to travel across SNC's watershed, strong local offices and locally based technical staff are essential to delivering rapid site visits, emergency response, field monitoring, permitting, and stewardship services. Protecting our communities and supporting sustainable development depend on maintaining local capacity where people live and work.

With the right commitment, this moment can become an opportunity to shape the future of conservation in Ontario in a meaningful and lasting way.