Effects of Provincial Changes to Conservation Authorities Funding and Legislation on Bruce County

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Unprecedented Floods and Storms

- Highways closed and sections of Bracebridge, Ottawa, Montreal and many Quebec and NB towns submerged

- The Insurance Bureau of Canada quantified over $80 million in insured damages from a Toronto thunderstorm in August 2018, and the 2013 Toronto floods caused almost $1 billion in damages

- Calgary estimates that their 2013 flood cost over $6-billion and the loss of five lives

- Climate Change fears are increasing, and the harsh reality is that the frequency and magnitude of potential flood events and underlying water levels are going to increase going forward
It Happens Here, too..

Municipalities and the public need Conservation Authorities vigilantly doing the important, skilled yet often unseen work to keep you and your family safe.
Protecting People and Property from Flooding is a CA Priority

- CAs predict water levels and peaks, considering flood plains, expected storms, snow depth and temperature, river levels and soil saturation
  - Informs Municipal Leaders, Fire Chiefs, Forepersons, Emergency Management Coordinators and Roads Superintendents
- CAs support studies such as whether municipal infrastructure has capacity for storms, and emergency routes in flood scenarios

Anyone can check near real-time monitoring information at greysauble.on.ca
Provincial Budget Cut in Half
CA’s Flood-related Funding

The Provincial share of this funding has been stagnant, and Grey Sauble Conservation Authority’s (GSCA) and Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority’s (SVCA) funding have remained at $71,779 and $157,669 since 1996.

This has forced CAs to continually streamline – there is nothing left to cut. The GSCA department is one person (with support from field staff).

And now… the provincial government has halved this already meagre funding, meanwhile stating that it is re-focusing conservation authorities on this core mandate

Rural CAs will suffer disproportionately.

Given severe weather and development pressures, GSCA has already recognized the need to ADD a water scientist or engineer to support flood mitigation, analysis and the update of many 1980 and 1990 studies.
“Ontario is well positioned to respond to the ongoing flooding in our communities, and we have supplies strategically located across the province to aid any municipality across the province that requests assistance. On average, provincial funding accounts for less than 10 per cent of a conservation authority’s overall budget. This reduction will not interfere with the core programs that conservation authorities are mandated to provide and Ontarians depend on.”

John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, in a statement on April 25th 2019.
Other Provincial Cuts

- Cuts affecting Counties and local municipalities have raised challenges for the continued provision of Long Term Care, paramedic services, and regional government review, among others.

- CAs are also affected by elimination of funding for:
  - The 50-Million Tree planting subsidy, as the province says that wood companies are planting the trees Ontario needs.
  - Summer staff to deliver water quality monitoring and stewardship.
  - A project reviewing of the health of the Georgian Bay shorelines. Over the GSCA watershed and considering support for the North Bruce Peninsula shoreline this is over 500km of shoreline.

It is unclear if further cuts are coming.
Legislative Change will limit Watershed-wide Approach

- Despite extensive consultation and a 2017 Conservation Authorities Act update, Government has proposed “modernizing conservation authority operations” (ERO #013-5018) to “focus conservation authorities on a core mandate of:
  - *Natural hazard protection and management*
  - *Conservation authority owned lands and conservation; and,*
  - *Drinking water source protection."

- The municipally-appointed Board of Directors would be able to levy member municipalities *only* for these activities.

- Water does not respect political boundaries. Limiting integrated watershed management governance will undermine the mandate, premise and value of your conservation authorities.
  - Self-generated income leverages each municipal dollar by over 2 to 1.
  - Individual agreements with multiple municipalities and two counties, as well as uncertainties as varying groups buy into in each program will consume resources that should be used for delivery.
We Need your Support to Keep Doing this Important Work

- The quality of life that you enjoy in Ontario is at risk, including the ability of Grey Sauble Conservation Authority to advocate for balance and keep Grey and Bruce Counties special for generations to come.

- Less provincial funding for critical flood forecasting, dam operations, and natural hazard protections will require municipalities to shoulder these costs.

- If the Conservation Authority diverts funding from other programs to cover this deficiency, education, recreational dams, stewardship, water quality testing, and more could be impacted.
Proposed Motion

We respectfully request that Council consider a Motion of support:

- **WHEREAS** Climate Change and flooding are mounting threats in Bruce County, & Conservation Authorities provide services including real-time flood forecasting, emergency planning support and water-related studies, and

- **WHEREAS**, in 1996, the total provincial Section 39 Transfer Payment to all of Ontario’s conservation authorities for Flood and Erosion Control and Natural Hazard Prevention was reduced from $50-million to $7.4-million, and Grey Sauble Conservation Authority’s (GSCA) and Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority’s (SVCA) share of this payment has remained static at $71,779 and $157,669 since 1996, and

- **WHEREAS** the recent Provincial Budget has further reduced GSCA’s and SVCA’s Section 39 Transfer Payments about 50% to $37,055 & $81,396, and

- **WHEREAS** this will affect emergency management supports & municipal planning, zoning & development input provided by GSCA & SVCA, and

- **WHEREAS** there is a provincial role in province-wide flood risks reduction and emergency management, and investments in prevention can potentially avoid or reduce losses to life and property and major expenditures during and after an emergency, and
WHEREAS the Ontario Government’s Proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario 013-5018 on Modernizing Conservation Authority (CA) Operations proposes to define a limited list of the core mandatory programs and services for CAs,

THAT Bruce County recognizes the value provided by the work of the CAs, supports the current multi-municipality governance model for the selection of programs, and the current municipal levying approach that includes annual input from Local Municipal Councils, and

THAT Bruce County recommends that the province acknowledge their strong and positive provincial role in flood risk reduction programs and reinstate funding to CAs, and

THAT County Staff be directed to provide a copy of this resolution to the Environmental Registry of Ontario (https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/013-5018) prior to the May 20th deadline, to Ministers Bill Walker and Lisa Thompson, Ministers MECP, MNRF and MOF, the Premier, AMO, ROMA, OSUM, and Conservation Ontario.
Questions or Comments?

For More Information:

- Cathy Little, Chair, GSCA Board of Directors - councillorlittle@greyhighlands.ca
- Dan Gieruszak, Chair, SVCA Board of Directors - dgieruszak@brockton.ca
- Sonya Skinner, GSCA CAO – 519 376 3076 or s.skinner@greysauble.on.ca
- Wayne Brohman, SVCA CAO – 519 367-3040 x. 232 or w.brohman@SVCA.ON.CA
APPENDIX
GSCA’s 2019 Funding Sources – Before the Provincial Cuts

Total Proposed Budget: $3.32M
What is a Conservation Authority?

Ontario’s 36 Conservation Authorities:

- Are created under the Conservation Authorities Act as “…a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals.”
- Are governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the watershed municipalities.
Grey Sauble Conservation Authority Jurisdictions

Grey Sauble’s Mission Statement: In partnership with stakeholders of the watershed, to promote and undertake sustainable management of renewable natural resources and to provide responsible leadership to enhance bio-diversity and environmental awareness.

Vision Statement: A healthy watershed environment in balance with the needs of society.

Drinking Water Source Protection Mission Statement: Providing leadership to engage the entire community in developing comprehensive, responsible solutions to protect our water resources.