

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, November 6, 2025

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Ray Chartrand, Adrian Cornelissen, Joey Groot, Steve Herold, Jaden Hodgins,
Dave Jewitt, David Marsh, Wayne Shipley, Marissa Vaughan

STAFF PRESENT

Andrew Bicknell, Tina Crown, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Nathan Schoelier,
Mari Veliz.

OTHERS PRESENT

Rebekah Msuya-Collison, CAO, Municipality of South Huron
Mike Rolph, Director of Building and Planning/Chief Building Officer, Municipality of South Huron

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ray Chartrand called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m., welcomed everyone in attendance, and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement. He noted that the reason for calling the meeting was to bring the Board of Directors up-to-date on the proposed changes to Conservation Authorities by the Province of Ontario.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #BD 74/25

Moved Marissa Vaughan

Seconded by Jaden Hodgins

“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the November 6, 2025 Board of Directors Special Meeting be approved.”

Carried.

DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest at this meeting or from the previous meeting.

DISCLOSURE OF INTENTION TO RECORD

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Ray Chartrand informed the Board of Directors, that the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks has proposed changes to Conservation Authorities. He noted that he and Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, were in a briefing with the Province prior to the announcement. Chair Chartrand asked Davin to go through the proposed changes with the Board of Directors.

Davin prepared a presentation noting the changes proposed by the Province. He reported that they propose to create the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA), which would oversee the proposed changes. Hassan Bassitt, former CAO of Conservation Halton, has taken the role of Chief Conservation Executive to oversee the process.

The main proposed changes at present include consolidating the current 36 Conservation Authorities into 7 Conservation Regions. They also propose making a consistent and streamlined permitting process, developing performance goals for conservation authorities. This process would also reduce the number of conservation authority jurisdictions that some municipalities fall within (e.g. Municipality of Middlesex Centre crosses borders with five conservation authorities). While a more consistent process across the province is ideal, there is still some concern regarding local representation and governance.

It was noted that the reasons for these proposed changes are not clear, and some Board Directors felt that there were other ways to accomplish them rather than consolidating conservation authorities. The Province notes that this process would create more resources for front line work, improve flooding and erosion control, maintain strong environmental protection, create a faster permitting system, modernize service delivery and create consistent standards and technologies across the province. They note that watershed boundaries would remain in place, programs and services will continue, lands and trails would continue to be maintained and established, sources of funding will not change and that conservation authorities will maintain relationships with landowners, municipalities and developers.

Davin noted that there are still a lot of questions, which will hopefully be answered in the coming weeks once the posting is made to the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO). Once it is posted, a 45-day comment period will be in place, and staff will be encouraging Member Municipalities and community partners to submit comments and concerns.

This posting will then be reviewed in 2026. Any proposed changes to conservation authorities would not take place until the end of the current municipal term, and consolidation is proposed to begin in 2027. This means that the current budget process will remain in place and continue for 2026.

Chair Chartrand and Davin noted that there was an upcoming Conservation Ontario meeting that they would both be participating in, and would bring questions and concerns forward. Staff will continue to keep the Board and Member Municipalities updated as more information is released.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Joey Groot at 12:12 p.m.

Ray Chartrand
Chair

Abigail Gutteridge
Secretary

*Copies of program reports are available upon request.
Contact Abigail Gutteridge, Corporate Services Coordinator*