



THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

COUNCIL WEEKLY CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION

INDEX

Thursday, April 2, 2026

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If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend or participate in meetings or events, please contact the Accessibility Advisor at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 (office), 289-929-8376 (cellphone) or accessibility@niagararegion.ca (email).

Memorandum

CWCD 2026-59

Subject: Summary of Active Bid Solicitations

Date: Thursday, April 2, 2026

To: Regional Council

From: Bart Menage, Director, Procurement Services

Please be advised that the Bid Solicitations included in Appendix 1 are currently active.

As per the Procurement By-law 2025-57, section 19. Reporting, item 19.1 The Director, Procurement Services shall:

(a) report to Council on a weekly basis via Councillor Weekly Correspondence Distribution:

(i) a summary of active Bid Solicitations.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

Bart Menage
Director, Procurement Services

Appendices

Appendix 1 Summary of Active Bid Solicitations

Bid Number	Name	Closing Date
2026-RFP-13	Tree Supply and Tree Planting Services Contract	April 02, 2026
2026-Q-36	Adobe Software License Renewals for NRPS	April 07, 2026
2026-RFI-34	Customer Relationship Management System	April 07, 2026
2026-T-18	Niagara Region LTC - Commercial Kitchen Equipment Replacement & Upgrades	April 09, 2026
2025-RFP-199	HVAC Demand and Preventive Maintenance Services for Long-Term Care Homes	April 13, 2026
2026-RFP-27	Supply, Delivery, Maintenance and Commissioning of Dual-View Inductively Coupled Plasma-Optical Emission Spectrometer (ICP-OES) for the Niagara Region Environmental Laboratory (NREL)	April 14, 2026
2026-T-31	Supply of Sewer Flow Meter Equipment for Gravity Sewer Mains	April 14, 2026
2024-T-194	St. Catharines Train Station – Exterior/Interior Alterations – Phase II	April 16, 2026
2025-RFP-247	Niagara Homelessness Service System – Geneva Supportive Housing	April 16, 2026
2026-T-2	Supply & Installation of Decals on Niagara Transit Commission Vehicles	April 16, 2026
2025-T-222	Park Road Reservoir Generator Replacement	April 21, 2026
2026-T-22	6271 Glengate St., Branscombe Child Care, Interior/Exterior Renovation for Service Expansion	April 21, 2026
2026-RFP-23	RR16 Sodom Road - Lyon's Creek Rd to Willick Rd - Road Reconstruction	April 22, 2026
2026-T-38	Supply and Delivery of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems and Accessories for the Niagara Regional Police Service	April 22, 2026
2025-RFP-217	Provision for Security Consulting Services on Video Surveillance	April 24, 2026
2025-T-243	Landfill Manhole Safety Gratings	April 27, 2026
2025-T-233	Supply & Delivery of Bus Shelter Replacements	April 28, 2026

Bid Number	Name	Closing Date
2026-T-45	Annual Inspection, Lubrication, Cleaning and Maintenance of Biogas Trains at Wastewater Locations	April 30, 2026

March 30, 2026

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

RE: Provincial Announcement – Next Steps to Improve Ontario’s Conservation Authority System

Please be advised that at the NPCA’s Full Authority Meeting held on March 27, 2026, the following resolution pertaining to Report FA-02-26 RE: Provincial Announcement – Next Steps to Improve Ontario’s Conservation Authority System was passed:

Resolution No. FA-31-2026

Moved by: Stew Beattie

Seconded by: Michelle Seaborn

WHEREAS on October 31, 2025, the provincial government announced a proposal to establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) to lead the implementation of a new regional conservation authority framework;

AND WHEREAS on November 6, 2025, Bill 68, *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025 (No.2)* was introduced in the Ontario Legislature, which proposed amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* to establish OPCA, and on November 27, 2025, Bill 68 received Royal Assent;

AND WHEREAS on November 7, 2025, the provincial government posted a policy proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO #025-1257) to consolidate Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities and provided a 45-day commenting period on proposed boundaries and the criteria applied to inform the proposed boundaries;

AND WHEREAS on December 5, 2025, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) Board of Directors passed Resolution No. FA-131-2025, that stated the Board does not support the “Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration as the proposal lacks sufficient justification, would significantly diminish local governance, and fails to recognize the effectiveness and efficiencies already achieved within existing watershed-based models;

AND WHEREAS NPCA’s participating municipalities of Niagara Region, City of Hamilton and Haldimand County, and several watershed lower-tier municipalities passed Council resolutions and submitted comments to the provincial government demonstrating support for the position of the NPCA Board of Directors;

AND WHEREAS on March 10, 2025, the provincial government announced their decision on the boundaries for Ontario’s new nine regional conservation authorities, with the “Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” boundaries remaining unchanged, and provided further information related to governance and the transition process;

March 30, 2026

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

AND WHEREAS amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, and implementing Regulations will be required to facilitate the statutory amalgamation of regional conservation authorities;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved:

THAT Report No. FA-02-26 RE: Provincial Announcement – Next Steps to Improve Ontario’s Conservation Authority System **BE RECEIVED**;

AND THAT the NPCA Board of Directors reaffirms their position stated through Resolution No. FA-131-2025;

AND THAT should the provincial government proceed with implementing the proposed regional conservation authority framework and “Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority”, the NPCA will be committed to working constructively with OPCA, local area MPPs, neighbouring conservation authorities, municipalities, sector partners and interested partners to ensure local voices, municipal representations, and unique watershed characteristics continue to guide decisions;

AND THAT the Board requests that OPCA engages meaningfully and collaboratively with affected municipalities, conservation authorities, and local First Nations before advancing any consolidation, to ensure that any changes reflect both local needs and the practical realities of implementation;

AND THAT this resolution and Report No. FA-02-26 be forwarded to Niagara Region; the lower-tier municipalities within Niagara Region; City of Hamilton; Haldimand County; Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation; Six Nations of the Grand River; Niagara Peninsula Source Protection Committee; Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks; Ontario’s Chief Conservation Executive; local area MPPs; Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO); Conservation Ontario; and all conservation authorities in Ontario.

CARRIED

A copy of Report No. FA-02-26 has been attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,



Melanie Davis
Manager, Office of the CAO & Board
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

March 30, 2026

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

cc: Leilani Lee-Yates, CAO/Secretary – Treasurer
Regional Municipality of Niagara
Local Area Municipalities
City of Hamilton
Haldimand County
Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
Six Nations of the Grand River
Hon. Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Hassaan Basit, Chief Conservation Executive
Hon. Sam Oosterhoff, Niagara West MPP
Hon. Donna Skelly, Flamborough – Glanbrook MPP
Jennie Stevens, St. Catharines MPP
Wayne Gates, Niagara Falls MPP
Jeff Burch, Niagara Centre MPP
Bobbi-Ann Brady, Haldimand – Norfolk MPP
Niagara Peninsula Source Protection Committee
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Conservation Authorities in Ontario

Report To: Board of Directors

Subject: Provincial Announcement – Next Steps to Improve Ontario’s Conservation Authority System

Report No: FA-02-26

Date: March 27, 2026

Recommendation:

WHEREAS on October 31, 2025, the provincial government announced a proposal to establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) to lead the implementation of a new regional conservation authority framework;

AND WHEREAS on November 6, 2025, Bill 68, *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025 (No.2)* was introduced in the Ontario Legislature, which proposed amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* to establish OPCA, and on November 27, 2025, Bill 68 received Royal Assent;

AND WHEREAS on November 7, 2025, the provincial government posted a policy proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO #025-1257) to consolidate Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities and provided a 45-day commenting period on proposed boundaries and the criteria applied to inform the proposed boundaries;

AND WHEREAS on December 5, 2025, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) Board of Directors passed Resolution No. FA-131-2025, that stated the Board does not support the “Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration as the proposal lacks sufficient justification, would significantly diminish local governance, and fails to recognize the effectiveness and efficiencies already achieved within existing watershed-based models;

AND WHEREAS NPCA’s participating municipalities of Niagara Region, City of Hamilton and Haldimand County, and several watershed lower-tier municipalities passed Council resolutions and submitted comments to the provincial government demonstrating support for the position of the NPCA Board of Directors;

AND WHEREAS on March 10, 2025, the provincial government announced their decision on the boundaries for Ontario's new nine regional conservation authorities, with the "Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority" boundaries remaining unchanged, and provided further information related to governance and the transition process;

AND WHEREAS amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, and implementing Regulations will be required to facilitate the statutory amalgamation of regional conservation authorities;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved:

THAT Report No. FA-02-26 RE: Provincial Announcement – Next Steps to Improve Ontario's Conservation Authority System **BE RECEIVED**;

AND THAT the NPCA Board of Directors reaffirms their position stated through Resolution No. FA-131-2025;

AND THAT should the provincial government proceed with implementing the proposed regional conservation authority framework and "Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority", the NPCA will be committed to working constructively with OPCA, neighbouring conservation authorities, municipalities, sector partners and interested partners to ensure local voices, municipal representations, and unique watershed characteristics continue to guide decisions;

AND THAT the Board requests that OPCA engages meaningfully and collaboratively with affected municipalities, conservation authorities, and local First Nations before advancing any consolidation, to ensure that any changes reflect both local needs and the practical realities of implementation;

AND THAT this resolution and Report No. FA-02-26 be forwarded to Niagara Region; the lower-tier municipalities within Niagara Region; City of Hamilton; Haldimand County; Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation; Six Nations of the Grand River; Niagara Peninsula Source Protection Committee; Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks; Ontario's Chief Conservation Executive; local area MPPs; Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO); Conservation Ontario; and all conservation authorities in Ontario.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the decision notice in relation to ERO #025-1257 and next steps proposed by the Province of Ontario for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities.

Background:

On November 7, 2025, the Province posted a policy proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO #025-1257) to consolidate Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities (CAs) into seven Regional Conservation Authorities (RCAs) and provided a 45-day commenting period on proposed boundaries and the criteria applied to inform the proposed boundaries.

Under this proposal, NPCA would fall under the Western Lake Ontario RCA, along with Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA), Conservation Halton (CH), and Credit Valley Conservation (CVC). The boundaries of the Western Lake Ontario RCA extend along the western Lake Ontario shoreline from Niagara through Halton and Peel, encompassing urban and rural watersheds that support the Greater Toronto-Hamilton corridor.

The Western Lake Ontario RCA is primarily based on the western portion of the Northern Lake Ontario and Niagara River Secondary Watershed. The RCA would also include the Niagara Peninsula Source Protection Area, Halton-Hamilton Source Protection Region, and Credit Valley Source Protection Area (which is part of Credit Valley – Toronto and Region – Central Lake Ontario Source Protection Region).

On November 27, 2025, Bill 68, *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025 (No.2)* received Royal Assent and the amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* allow for the establishment of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) to implement a new regional conservation authority framework.

On December 5, 2025, NPCA held a Special Meeting of the Full Authority Board to review the ERO comment submission (Report No. FA-59-25) and passed Resolution No. FA-131-2025, that stated the Board does not support the "Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority" boundary configuration as the proposal lacks sufficient justification, would significantly diminish local governance, and fails to recognize the effectiveness and efficiencies already achieved within existing watershed-based models.

On March 10, 2026, Hon. Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and Chief Conservation Executive, Mr. Hassaan Basit announced [next steps for the consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities](#), including the decision to proceed with a total of nine (9) RCAs. NPCA remains part of the Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority with HCA, CH, and CVC. [Decision details pertaining to ERO #025-1257](#) were posted for review later that day. Over 14,000 comment submissions were received by the provincial government.

Further, on March 10, 2026, the Chairs of the current 36 CAs received a letter from Minister McCarthy regarding next steps for the planned consolidation of regional conservation authorities.

Discussion:

The decision of the provincial government to consolidate the current 36 CAs into nine RCAs was based on feedback received through the ERO consultation process as a part of the government's plan to improve Ontario's conservation authority systems, to ensure CAs have the tools required to protect the communities they serve, supporting economic prosperity while balancing environmental protection and development needs.

The final boundaries were adjusted based on the feedback that the proposed boundaries were too large, did not align with watersheds and covered areas of differing environmental needs. Adjustments were made to accommodate areas with distinct geographies and development contexts, better balance differing priorities across rural, urban, and northern areas and improve alignment with watersheds and with source protection regions.

The new nine RCAs are:

- Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority
- Eastern Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority
- Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority
- Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority
- Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority
- Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority
- St. Lawrence River Regional Conservation Authority
- Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority
- Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

Maps of the planned boundaries for the nine RCA's can be viewed on the [OPCA website](#). This spring, the government plans to introduce amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* that, if passed, will enable the consolidation of Ontario's CAs through statutory amalgamation.

Statutory Amalgamation

To address concerns raised around service continuity for communities, the provincial government is proposing statutory amalgamation that intends to avoid disruptions to existing partnerships and agreements with municipalities, Indigenous communities, and other partners. On the transition date to occur in early 2027, or a later date prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the former CAs would be amalgamated creating the RCA, and legal continuation is provided for:

- Ensuring all rights, obligations, assets and liabilities from the CAs would become those of the new RCAs.
- Providing for the continuation of all existing agreements, contracts, permitting or other actions underway.

- Ensuring the current jurisdiction of the individual CAs are combined to become the jurisdiction of the consolidated RCA.
- Specifying that the provisions of the *Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act* would apply to the consolidation of CAs.

The assets, liabilities and agreements of the predecessor CAs would become those of the new RCA. The province indicated that residents would continue to work with the same local teams who know their watershed, understand local issues and provide on-the-ground support.

Transition to Consolidated Conservation Authorities

The transition process will be led by OPCA, providing the tools and resources to coordinate the transition over the next year with the target date of early 2027. The province also announced \$20 million in initial funding to support OPCA in leading the transition and implementation, with an additional \$3 million this year and every following year to be administered by OPCA to support RCAs with program improvements and service delivery.

The Ministry plans to propose amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* to facilitate the transition process that would:

- Suspend existing provisions in the *Conservation Authorities Act* allowing for the establishment, enlargement, amalgamation, and dissolution of CAs during the transition period.
- Enable the Minister to issue immediate temporary restrictions on certain activities by CAs, to facilitate the planned consolidation. The intent is to restrict activities related to extraordinary financial, asset, or employment decisions to mitigate risk and ensure a stable transition to the new regional structure. These directions would expire upon consolidation, at the latest.
- Require OPCA to:
 - Establish Transition Committees for each RCA to include the CAO/General Manager and one municipally elected board member from each of the current CAs, and any other members as appointed by OPCA.
 - Appoint Project Executives who will chair the Transition Committees, and upon regional consolidation would serve as inaugural CAO of the RCA for up to 24 months. Following this period, the Board members of the RCA will assume responsibility for long-term CAO decisions.
- Mandate Transition Committees to develop a transition plan to prepare for the consolidation subject to OPCA's review. Project Executives will be able to request information from CAs as needed to support the development of the transition plan.
- Require Board members of RCAs to be selected by the participating municipalities prior to the date of consolidation.

- Require new RCAs to implement the transition plan, with the opportunity to make revisions subject to OPCA's approval, and report on progress of implementation to OPCA.

Governance of Consolidated Conservation Authorities

The RCAs would continue to be municipally governed organizations. The provincial government's plan would make participating municipalities those that are at the upper and single-tier levels, which is already the case for the NPCA. The number of members appointed to each RCA would be streamlined with around 15-20 members, with population-based representation. Each participating municipality would be guaranteed a member, and limitations would be placed on the number of members appointed by any one municipality to ensure fairness and balance.

Participating municipalities for the proposed Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority would include the City of Hamilton, Dufferin County, Haldimand County, Halton Region, Niagara Region, Peel Region, and Wellington County.

The Ministry plans to propose further amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* that would:

- Enable the Minister to issue directions regarding the budget and apportionment process for 2027 CA budgets that occurs during 2026.
- Update the CA governance structure for RCAs with participating municipalities being the upper-tier and single-tier municipalities within a CA's area of jurisdiction.
- Set out that the method for determining the number of Board members that each participating municipality appoints to the RCA would be prescribed in regulation based on each participating municipality's proportion of the population in the RCA's jurisdiction; each participating municipality would be guaranteed at least one member. The maximum number of members appointed by all participating municipalities of a CA (maximum board size), and the maximum number of members that any one municipality could appoint are to be established through regulations if legislative amendments are passed, to ensure fairness and balance.
- Update other governance provisions including removing the requirement that 70 per cent of appointments of members to the CA by a participating municipality be elected officials and that the positions of chair and vice chair be filled on a rotating basis between participating municipalities.
- Add that certain knowledge and experience must be considered by municipalities when appointing members to the CA who do not sit on municipal council.

- Update that chairs and vice-chairs may be appointed for two-year terms, and up to a maximum of eight total years served.

Establishing Local Watershed Councils

In response to feedback that emphasized the need for RCAs to continue to rely on the deep local expertise, knowledge and relationships built, the province plans to mandate that each RCA would be required to establish at least one watershed council to ensure local interests are considered and that watershed planning continues to be guided by local knowledge and input. These advisory councils would enable diverse participation from lower-tier municipalities, Indigenous communities and other interested parties that aim to ensure local voices and on-the-ground insights are considered in regional decision-making.

The Ministry plans to propose amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* that would require one or more watershed councils for each RCA and create regulation-making authority to the Minister to outline the number, composition, functions, powers, duties, activities and procedures of watershed councils.

NPCA's Commitment to Continuous Process Improvement and Modernization

While the NPCA supports the proposed provincial investments in technology, standardization and modernization, concerns remain regarding the uncertainties and potential risks associated with regional consolidation including risk to local representation and decision-making, potential loss of local expertise including staff subject matter expertise, and the continued ability to deliver high quality programs and services specific to unique watersheds and communities including natural hazard management.

Should the provincial government move forward with implementing the proposed regional conservation authority framework and Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority, the NPCA will be committed to working constructively with OPCA, neighbouring conservation authorities, municipalities, sector partners and interested partners to ensure local voices, municipal representations, and unique watershed characteristics continue to guide decisions.

NPCA will also ensure that as part of the proposed Transition Committee, our successes and strengths in process improvements and modernization are underscored as best management practices.. Over the last several years, the NPCA has undertaken tremendous work to improve governance, operations, policies, and processes to strengthen the delivery of programs and services. NPCA has implemented all 20 recommendations within the 2018 Auditor General report and is focused on continuous improvements through updating planning and permitting policies, updating corporate policies, developing new guiding strategies, enhancing procedures, and implementing other modernization initiatives, including investments in software and data management.

Since 2014, the NPCA has invested over \$3 million on GIS data; regulation mapping updates (including floodplain mapping); planning policy and procedural updates; dam safety reviews; IT support improvements; and corporate enterprise resource software to support planning and permitting, human resources, budgeting, asset inventory management, and capital planning. This long-term investment has included:

- **CityView** – First launched in 2016, it is the main filing system for all development application activity in the Planning and Development Division. By 2021, CityView has been storing/processing an average of 1,404 file types per year. In addition to providing a consistent workflow for application reviews, CityView query functionality tracks a wide range of metrics for application review times and staff efficiency. During 2026, the NPCA will be implementing several improvements to CityView including additional data fields for metrics tracking, an online Permit application intake portal, and a new module for our Compliance and Enforcement Department. As a significant capital investment for the NPCA, CityView is a powerful system to help provide timely permit approvals and planning application reviews.
- **CityWide and FMW** – NPCA’s enterprise system used for asset management, corporate operating and capital budgeting, and financial reporting, providing a centralized platform to track Authority-owned assets, support annual budget development and financial planning. The system improves data accuracy, consistency, and accountability by standardizing asset and financial information across the organization. Investment includes software licensing and vendor support, with staff time concentrated around the annual budget cycle and ongoing effort for system administration and data maintenance.
- **ArcGIS** – NPCA’s enterprise geographic information system, supporting mapping, spatial analysis, and decision-making related to watershed management, planning, and operations. The platform enables both internal analysis and public-facing maps and applications that improve transparency and access to conservation authority information. Investment includes software licensing, infrastructure, and specialized staff resources to maintain data, systems, and public-facing services.
- **Laserfiche** – NPCA’s enterprise records management system, used to store, manage, and retrieve official corporate records in a secure and compliant manner. It supports improved information governance, efficient retrieval, and reduced reliance on shared drives and paper records. Investment includes licensing and ongoing support, with staff time required for system administration, records structure maintenance, and user onboarding.

NPCA has set an example for how CAs can implement best management practices and we remain committed to continuously improving the delivery of our programs and services for the health and well-being of our local watersheds and communities.

Financial Implications:

Any consolidation of the NPCA with other CAs would require closer examination to determine financial implications with respect to items such as operating and capital budgets, asset management, salaries and benefits for both union and non-union roles, changes to fee schedules, and cost apportionment to the OPCA.

Although not mentioned as part of the proposed regional consolidation of CAs, many CAs, including the NPCA, have a Foundation. Any consolidation of NPCA with other CAs will need to examine financial and governance implications for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation.

Links to Policy/Strategic Plan:

Goal 4.1 – Strengthen government relations toward collective outcomes and impact

Related Reports and Appendices:

Report No. FA-59-25 RE: Draft Comments Pertaining to ERO #025-1257 Regarding Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities

Report No. FA-56-25 RE: Proposed Amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* to establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, and Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities

Authored by:

Original Signed by:

Leilani Lee-Yates, BES, MSPL.RPD, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

Reviewed by:

Original Signed by:

David Decluce, MCIP, RPP
Director, Planning and Development

Submitted by:

Original Signed by:

Leilani Lee-Yates, BES, MSPL.RPD, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer/Secretary-Treasurer



NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Introducing Legislation to Strengthen Regional Governance

Proposed changes would help local leaders speed up decision-making, reduce costs and expedite housing and infrastructure

April 02, 2026

[Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing](#)

TORONTO — Today, the Ontario government introduced the [Better Regional Governance Act, 2026](#) that would, if passed, make a number of changes to the way regional governments function in some of Ontario’s fastest growing regions. These changes would support lower costs for municipal taxpayers and better alignment between regional decision-making and shared provincial-regional priorities. The proposed changes include giving the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing the power to appoint upper-tier council chairs in eight fast-growing regions and granting these council chairs “strong chair” powers to help them deliver on government priorities, such as housing and infrastructure. The proposed legislation would also reduce the cost of government and support efficient decision-making in Niagara Region and Simcoe County by reducing the size of Simcoe County Council and Niagara Regional Council.

“We will always support our municipal partners, both lower- and upper-tier, in delivering locally led solutions that offer better value for taxpayers and speed up decision-making,” said Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. “These changes provide the necessary tools for local leadership to advance our shared priorities and better serve our communities, including by expediting housing and infrastructure development.”

The proposed *Better Regional Governance Act, 2026* and related regulatory changes would enable the following:

- Allow the Minister to appoint regional chairs in Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo and York, as well as the warden of Simcoe County. Under previous legislation, the Minister had the authority to appoint chairs in Niagara, Peel and York regions for the 2022-2026 council term only.
- Regional chairs in the eight municipalities listed above would receive “strong chair” powers which mirror [“strong mayor” powers](#), providing



more efficient, streamlined local decision-making, enabling them to deliver faster results for residents and support efforts to advance shared provincial-municipal priorities.

- The number of municipal elected officials in Simcoe (population 351,927) and Niagara (population 477,941) is significantly higher than many other comparable municipalities in the province. For instance, Niagara region has 126 local elected officials across its upper and lower-tier councils. By comparison, Toronto City Council has 26 members for a population of over three million and Queen's Park has 124 MPPs representing over 16 million people across the province. This increases the cost of government for local taxpayers and creates dysfunction at council. To address these concerns, the government is proposing the following changes:
 - In response to a request from the county warden, Simcoe County Council would be reduced from 32 members to 17. The new council would be made up of mayors of the 16 lower-tier municipalities, plus the warden.
 - Niagara Regional Council would be reduced from 32 members to 13 members. The new council would include the mayors of each of Niagara's 12 lower-tier municipalities plus the regional chair.

To facilitate the transition to the new council structure and ensure appropriate and effective representation, the government would also work with local municipal leadership to develop a weighted voting framework, which is already in force in Simcoe County and would be applied in Niagara Region.

All regions must review their council composition following the 2026 municipal election. Niagara Region would be exempt in 2026 and would return to regular reviews after the 2034 municipal election. The government will continue working with municipalities to identify ways to strengthen local governance in Niagara, Simcoe and beyond. Working together to advance shared provincial-municipal priorities helps advance housing and economic development, preparing both individual municipalities and the province as a whole for growth.

Quick Facts

- Currently, the heads of council of upper-tier municipalities have been selected using different methods – in Durham, Halton and Waterloo they were elected by the voters; in Peel, Muskoka and Simcoe County, they were appointed by the upper-tier council; and in Niagara and York they were appointed by the Minister.



- When Simcoe County tried to reduce its own council size, it received support from both county council and lower tier municipalities representing a majority of Simcoe County's eligible voters. However, it lost on a tie – eight lower-tier municipalities supported reducing the size of county council, while eight lower-tiers were opposed.
- Weighted voting is a system where each member of council may be assigned a different number of votes. The number can be determined by many factors, including population or the number of electors in the ward represented. Since different individual members of council may have a different number of votes, in a weighted vote, a simple "majority of members" may be different from the "majority of weighted votes."
- The proposed amendments would also provide the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with regulation-making authority to set out weighted voting rules for upper-tier municipal councils starting with the term following the 2026 regular election.
- The government is announcing these changes in advance of the May 1, 2026, nomination deadline to give municipalities and candidates time to prepare for the fall municipal election.

Quotes

"Strong regional leadership is essential to get more homes built and reduce costs in communities like Muskoka and across Ontario. Our government is taking steps to ensure regional governments, like the District of Muskoka, can move forward with a clear vision and streamlined processes that better serve residents and taxpayers. Managing growth while protecting the unique character of our area will always remain paramount."

- Graydon Smith

Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka

"Simcoe County is the largest and one of the fastest growing counties in Ontario and an important municipal partner for our government. At the County's request and after years of internal discussion, our government is taking action to modernize Council composition, to make the County more responsive, and more efficient. We look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen the County and serve the residents of Simcoe."



- Brian Saunderson

**Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
and MPP for Simcoe-Grey**

"Regional leadership is vital to building strong, resilient communities. This legislation is a meaningful step forward in our government's plan to ensure municipalities have the tools they need to navigate economic uncertainty, remove barriers to building homes faster, and support long-term growth across Ontario. We will continue working with local leaders across Simcoe County to deliver results for families, unlock new opportunities, and build a stronger, more resilient region."

- Doug Downey

MPP for Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte

"Local governments are essential partners in delivering on the priorities that matter most to Ontarians and in ensuring our province remains strong in the face of economic uncertainty. This act would help strengthen alignment between municipal and provincial priorities and will support more coordinated decision-making, clearer accountability and the ability to advance key initiatives that benefit our communities."

- Jill Dunlop

MPP for Simcoe North

"The county asked for these changes, and our government is acting. Our community cannot afford any more delays or red tape when it comes to building housing, delivering infrastructure and supporting economic growth. This legislation would help communities move forward with housing and infrastructure projects that support long term prosperity."

- Andrea Khanjin

MPP for Barrie-Innisfil

"Municipalities are key partners in our plan to protect Ontario. By strengthening our regional governance, we are empowering municipalities with stronger tools to respond more effectively and efficiently to the challenges they face in their communities."

- Caroline Mulroney

MPP for York-Simcoe



"The population of Niagara is projected to increase to over 700,000 residents by 2051, a significant transformation which will require new and innovative approaches to municipal governance and long-term planning. In a growing region like ours, it's important to plan for the well-being and success of future generations who will call Niagara home. With the changes proposed for our region through the *Better Regional Governance Act*, Niagara will be ready to lead the province as a preferred place to live, work and visit."

- Sam Oosterhoff
MPP for Niagara West

"We thank Premier Ford and Minister Flack for their decision and direction. While our governance model has served the County effectively for many decades, there is recognition that further streamlining decision-making will better support the needs of our communities. This reduction in the size of Council, which was previously recommended by County Council, advances our ongoing efforts to be responsive and cost-efficient for residents, while continuing to ensure strong local decision-making at County Council through the leadership of our 16 lower-tier mayors. With growth in our services, there is also a strong need for a full-time Head of Council to focus on the interests of our residents and communities. These changes will help strengthen our ability to serve our growing region effectively."

- Basil Clarke
Warden, Simcoe County

"Change is long overdue in Niagara and the status quo is not an option. Taxes are too high because of duplication and inefficiencies and we need to streamline. No elected official will vote him or herself out of a job. We need this bold move from the Ontario government."

- Jim Diodati
Mayor, City of Niagara Falls

"I would like to personally thank the Ford government for making governance changes in Niagara. I believe this will lead to a more effective and efficient system that will benefit communities, residents and businesses within the Niagara Region."

- Frank Campion
Mayor, City of Welland



"Regional governance reform is a critical step toward ensuring fair, efficient, and accountable decision making across our communities. We look forward to working with the province to find the right balance of weighted voting representation that reflects both population and local voice."

- Sandra Easton
Mayor, Town of Lincoln

"Streamlining decision-making across Niagara is essential to delivering the Destination Niagara Strategy and supporting the region's long-term growth. Premier Ford's recent \$300 million investment underscores the importance of this work, and Niagara Parks, as a self-funded agency that receives no tax dollars, looks forward to continuing to work with our partners to enhance the visitor experience and keep Niagara among the best places in the world to visit."

- Graham Coveney
Chair, Niagara Parks Commission

"Regional governance reform is a vital opportunity to strengthen collaboration and strategic decision making that supports the entire visitor economy. As a current Board Member, the Tourism Partnership of Niagara looks forward to working with all partners to move Destination Niagara forward and ensure our region remains one of the most inspiring and sought after places to visit in the world."

- Mory Di Maurizio
Board Member, Tourism Partnership of Niagara

"The Niagara Home Builders' Association supports regional governance reform as an important step toward building a more efficient and responsive system that helps get homes and infrastructure built faster. We look forward to working collaboratively with the province and local municipalities to create the conditions needed to meet Niagara's growing housing and community needs."

- Kelly Anderson
Chair of the Niagara Home Builders Association

Additional Resources

- [Simcoe County Requests Province Implement Council Changes](#)



Media Contacts

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April 02, 2026

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- Annual Report - Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF).
- Call for Nominations for the 2026 - 2028 OSUM Executive Committee Election.
- AMO Launches Campaign to encourage participation in municipal elections.
- Help amplify AMO's candidate attraction and voter turnout campaign!
- Check out AMO's Using Social Media and Online Platforms Handguide.
- Ontario Heritage Framework Transformation: Archaeology Program changes.
- Applications Open for EASE Grant.
- Feedback Requested: Expanding the Canadian Navigable Waters Act.
- Ontario Webinar on Build Canada Homes.
- Introducing AMO Conference 2026 Keynote: Curse of Politics.
- New webinar: Mayor-CAO Relationship Series.
- Supporting your Run for Municipal Office in 2026: Resources and Workshops.
- Indigenous Candidates Thinking of Running for Office.
- Better Rural Data for Better Municipal Decisions - join ROMA TODAY at noon.
- OSUM 2026: The Small Urban Approach to Municipal Challenges.
- Preventing Escalated Behaviours Workshop: Practical Strategies for Safer Municipal Workplaces.
- Canoe JOC Event in Brantford.
- Stable natural gas rates all year long.
- Streamline Your Document Signing Process.
- Building Officials Training for Housing Permit Approvals.
- Careers.

AMO Matters

AMO released its [CCBF Annual Report](#) summarizing results from the investment of the Fund. Further details on CCBF activities, including progress on Asset Management, can be found in the [Outcomes Report](#).

[The Call for OSUM Executive Nominations](#) election is open. Those interested in running for the 2026-2028 OSUM Executive Committee term are required to fill out the attached [nomination form](#). Nomination form deadline for return is **4:00 p.m. on April 10, 2026**.

AMO has launched its province-wide campaign, When You Believe, They Believe, to showcase the everyday leadership of Ontarians and how it can translate into municipal office. Visit whenyoubelieve.ca to learn more.

Together, we can equip candidates and voters with the motivation and tools in preparation for the 2026 municipal election. By sparking participation now, we can build healthier local democracies for the future. Visit [AMO's Healthy Democracy Project public affairs campaign page](#) and download the toolkit to help amplify the reach and impact of this important campaign.

AMO's [Using Social Media and Online Platforms Handguide](#) includes practical tools and guidance related to moderating online platforms, navigating personal and official accounts and social media policies for consideration. This is one of seven guides included in AMO's Leading with Respect Handguides, which all provide practical tools to help councils and staff manage conflict and foster a culture of civility. These Handguides are the result of a joint initiative of AMO's Healthy Democracy and Workforce Development Projects.

Provincial Matters

The Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism is proposing changes to Ontario's Heritage Framework to streamline archaeological assessments and set criteria for evaluating Licensed Consultant Archaeologists' compliance records. [Provide feedback by April 5.](#)

The Enhancing Access to Spaces for Everyone (EASE) Grant awards up to \$60,000 for small capital projects for people with disabilities and older adults. Applications are open until May 7 at Ontario.ca/EaseGrant.

Federal Matters

Transport Canada needs feedback from the public on their discussion paper on the proposed expansion of the Minor Works Order under the Canadian Navigable Waters Act. [Comments are due tomorrow, April 3rd.](#)

On April 24th, Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada will host a webinar explaining Build Canada Homes' portal and investment policy framework in Ontario. [Register now over Microsoft Teams.](#)

Education Opportunities

AMO is pleased to announce the Curse of Politics podcast as the 2026 AMO Conference keynote speaker. Get ready for a commotion of insights,

arguments, opinions and an impossibly loud laugh or two. If you haven't already, [register today for the AMO Conference](#).

AMO and OMAA present the next Mayor–CAO Webinar Series session on upper-tier governance, featuring experienced CAO–Warden teams sharing practical leadership insights. [Register here](#).

Through our Healthy Democracy Project, we have designed a number of workshops and information sessions to support those considering a run for municipal office and those running again in the 2026 election. We are also offering a range of resources in addition to the workshops. [Register for workshops and access resources here](#).

AMO has expanded their Healthy Democracy campaign information workshops. We are now offering a series of workshops for urban Indigenous peoples interested in municipal office and running in the October 2026 elections. These sessions will provide insights and strategies to build your understanding and confidence around how to become a candidate and run a campaign. [Register here](#).

HEAR Initiative (Health, Economics, Adaptation in Rural Communities Initiative) is developing a new province-wide rural data platform designed to support more informed decision-making in rural communities. Join ROMA for an interactive information session **TODAY** at 12:00 p.m. to learn how household-level rural data can help strengthen municipal planning, funding applications, council decisions, advocacy efforts, and long-term community resilience across rural Ontario. [Register for the free session here](#).

Join your colleagues in the Town of Parry Sound, April 29-May 1, for the 70th Ontario Small Urban Conference. In celebration of small urban leadership, we have built a program featuring key issues from housing and homelessness, infrastructure challenges, incivility, weakened journalism, and strong mayor powers from the unique small urban municipal perspective. [View program outline and register now](#).

In partnership with the Public Services Health & Safety Association, AMO is pleased to offer its members an interactive workshop focused on Preventing Escalated Behaviours. This session introduces practical, person-centred strategies to help recognize early signs of escalation, strengthen communication, and confidently and professionally respond to difficult situations. [Register for the two-part May 7 and May 28 workshop now](#).

LAS

Join [Canoe](#) on April 8th in Brantford to learn more about Job Order Contracting (JOC), a new tool to modernize construction procurement. [Register Here](#).

LAS offers a [Natural Gas Program](#) that provides stable and predictable annual commodity pricing for municipal accounts through professional management and competitive supply arrangements. Over the last 5 years, a typical LAS client has saved more than 7% on their commodity costs.

Streamline your document signing process with secure and authentic online digital signatures through the Electronic Signature service offered by program partner, Notarius by Portage Cybertech. [Learn more.](#)

Municipal Wire*

Help your building officials approve high-performance housing faster. Passivehouse Canada is coordinating a [12-hour online course](#) to provide the technical tools to review complex projects in-house, reducing delays and permit backlogs.

Careers

[Senior Advisor - Association of Municipalities of Ontario \(AMO\)](#). Closing Date: April 14, 2026.

[Team Lead - Ministry of Finance](#). Closing Date: April 16, 2026.

[Senior Data and Quality Analyst - Ministry of Finance](#). Closing Date: April 16, 2026.

[Data and Quality Analyst - Ministry of Finance](#). Closing Date: April 16, 2026.

[Manager of Capital Engineering - Town of Innisfil](#). Closing Date: April 19, 2026.

[Chief Financial Officer - City of Kawartha Lakes](#). Closing Date: April 12, 2026.

About AMO

AMO is a non-profit organization representing almost all of Ontario's 444 municipal governments. AMO supports strong and effective municipal government in Ontario and promotes the value of municipal government as a vital and essential component of Ontario's and Canada's political system. Follow [@AMO](#) on LinkedIn!

AMO Contacts

[AMO Watchfile](#) Tel: 416.971.9856

[Conferences/Events](#)

[Policy and Funding Programs](#)

[LAS Local Authority Services](#)

[MEPCO Municipal Employer Pension Centre of Ontario](#)

[ONE Investment](#)

[Media Inquiries](#)

[Municipal Wire, Career/Employment and Council Resolution Distributions](#)
