Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors

NOLUM

4 December 2025

The Honourable Todd McCarthy
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Subject: Bill 68, Schedule 3 - Conservation Authority Amalgamations and Regional Boundaries

Dear Minister McCarthy,

We, the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors (NOLUM), are writing to provide feedback on the proposed consolidation of the northeastern Ontario conservation authorities and the regional boundaries envisioned.

As the Ministry-provided material correctly states, Conservation Authorities are organized based on watersheds. The proposed regional conservation authority boundaries for northeastern and northwestern Ontario do not align with this principle. The two proposed regional conservation authorities involving Northern Ontario are the only non-contiguous agglomerations of watersheds. This does not create the same efficiencies for the other regional conservation authorities.

We recognize that there are significant concerns regarding conservation authorities in Southern Ontario. Unfortunately, the solution proposed to address this Southern Ontario issue will create real and significant harm to a system that is functioning well in Northern Ontario.

The proposed regional boundaries cover vast, disconnected territories and include many small communities, leading to significant governance challenges. There are also huge financial considerations, as substantial reserves are set aside in our conservation authorities, paid for by residents, for future community infrastructure.

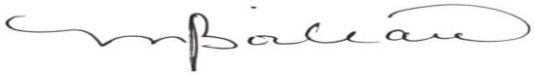
We are confident our conservation authorities will be happy to work collaboratively with the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency and utilize the shared digital platforms, common standards, and technical resources envisioned.

Our conservation authorities are lean organizations that are accountable, transparent, and provide efficient permit approvals and community services. The proposed regional model for Northern Ontario will not eliminate red tape and has the distinct potential to result in the opposite outcome of increased bureaucracy. For Northern Ontario, this is a situation of, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

NOLUM looks forward to collaborative discussions that enable our conservation authorities to continue in their current form, recognize the geographic realities of Northern Ontario, and establish protocols that will enable them to meaningfully engage with the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback and look forward to working with your Ministry on this matter in the future.

Sincerely,



Michelle Boileau, Mayor of Timmins

Ken Boshcoff, Mayor of Thunder Bay

Peter Chirico, Mayor of North Bay

Paul Lefebvre, Mayor of Greater Sudbury

Matthew Shoemaker, Mayor of Sault Ste Marie