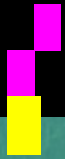
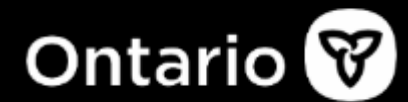




# Improving Ontario's System | Regional Engagement



# Purpose

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- To provide an overview of the government's plans to improve the conservation authority system in Ontario, by:
  1. Creating the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized leadership and oversight of conservation authorities
  2. Consolidating the existing 36 conservation authorities into regional conservation authorities

# Outline

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1. Introduction
2. Overview: Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency
3. Proposal: Regional consolidation of CAs and proposed boundaries
  - Consultation and Next Steps
4. Questions
  - Submit via the Q&A function on teams to be addressed following the presentation



# Introduction

# Introduction

- Conservation authorities (CAs) are created and governed by the *Conservation Authorities Act* (CAA). MECP administers the Act and oversees Ontario's 36 CAs.
- CAs are organized based on watersheds, crossing municipal boundaries. Each CA operates independently as a local public sector directed organization, governed by a board of municipally-appointed representatives. They do their own hiring and set their own compensation levels.
- CAs play a vital role in watershed management and protecting communities from natural hazards like floods. They also deliver programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, and management of natural resources.
- CAs issue permits to builders, municipalities, and property owners for development activities such as housing developments and installation of sewage systems in areas affected by risks of natural hazards such as floodplains, shorelines, river and stream valleys, and wetlands. Permitting helps to ensure that development does not happen in unsafe areas and that it does not worsen the impacts of flooding or erosion in surrounding areas.

## CA's BY THE NUMBERS

**1946**

Year the CAA was enacted

**36**

CAs in Ontario

**14M+**

People live in CA jurisdictions

**150,000**

Hectares in landholdings

**3,600+**

CA employees (full time, part time, seasonal)

**900+**

Dams, dykes, channels, control structures

**11,000+**

Development permits issued in 2023

**\$511M**

Total revenue across CAs in 2023

\*TRCA = \$177 million; remaining 35 CAs = \$334 million.

# Improving Ontario's Conservation Authorities



The provincial government is making improvements to Ontario's Conservation Authority system by:

1. Amending the CAA to create a provincial board-governed agency, the **Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency**, to provide province-wide coordination, shared digital and technical resources, and consistent practices that strengthen – not replace – the work of regional conservation authorities. ■



**PROTECT  
ONTARIO**

2. Consolidating the existing 36 CAs into regional

# Why are changes being made to Ontario's CA System?

- The *Conservation Authorities Act* was passed in 1946 and for nearly 80 years this legislation has enabled municipalities to form local watershed-based organizations to address challenges like drought, soil erosion, deforestation and flooding.
- Ontario is expected to grow by more than six million people in the next two decades and the challenges we face continue to increase in complexity from climate change, population growth and the pace of development.
- The government's plans to improve the CA system by creating an agency and regionally consolidating CAs, are not changing what conservation authorities do.
- These plans are intended to strengthen the capacity, influence, and impact of CAs in providing vital watershed management, in safeguarding people and property from flooding, and in being transparent and accountable in the delivery of permitting, programs, and services to Ontario's communities.
- With better tools and resources, and central enablement and support, CAs<sup>6</sup> can operate with greater consistency and transparency, and deliver improved services to municipalities and permit applicants aligned with provincial

# Why are changes being made to Ontario's CA System?

Key challenges the proposed changes seek to address include:

- **Patchwork of standards, service delivery:** Each CA has different policies, customer service standards, fees, processes and staffing and technical capacity leading to unpredictable and inconsistent turnaround times for approvals across all CAs. This can result in uncertainty and delays for builders, landowners, and farmers seeking permits.
- **Outdated and fragmented systems:** Discrepancies in the tools and technology that CAs use have led to varying types and quality of technology and data management. This can compromise effective provincewide flood risk management and evidence-based decision making.
- **Administrative duplication:** Under the current framework, municipalities are forced to fund duplicate corporate functions (e.g., procurement, communications), diverting costs away from front-line conservation and service delivery.
- **Need for more accountability and transparency:** Lack of transparent

# What's Changing/Not Changing

## What these changes mean:

- More resources for front-line services
- Improved flood management and erosion prevention
- Strong environmental protections maintained
- Faster permit approvals
- Modern service delivery
- Consistent standards and use of modern technology

## What's not changing:

- Governance model - regional CAs will continue independent, municipally-governed municipalities will continue to be represented directors for each Regional CA and will retain responsibilities for Regional CAs.
- Where regional CAs operate - areas currently served by CAs will continue to be served by regional CAs
- The programs and services regional CAs provide, including the responsibility for source water protection, natural hazard and watershed management
- Regional CA ownership and management of their lands and trails, providing access to green spaces, recreation and education programs
- Where and how regional CAs receive funding (e.g. municipal levy) including maintaining board approval of final Regional CA budgets.

# **Overview: Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency**

# Amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act

To improve the province's conservation authority system, the government has proposed to create a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized leadership and oversight of conservation authorities.

- Bill 68, Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2025 (No. 2) was introduced into the legislature on November 6, 2025.
  - Schedule 3 of Bill 68 includes proposed amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* to establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (the agency), including:
    - Establishing the objects of the agency
    - Setting out the governance of the proposed agency
    - Establishing tools for agency oversight of conservation authorities
    - Establishing provincial oversight of the agency
    - Setting out sources of agency funding
  - Bill 68 will proceed through the legislative process, and if passed, the provisions establishing the agency would come into effect upon
- <sup>10</sup> Royal Assent.

# Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency – Objects

The proposed objects of the agency are to:

1. Oversee the governance of authorities and other aspects of authorities such as their operations, including the programs and services they provide, to further the purposes of the Act.
2. Oversee the transition to a regional watershed-based framework for authorities in Ontario.
3. Promote consistent policies, standards and fees for programs and services provided by authorities.
4. Assess and report on the effectiveness of authorities in furthering the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in watersheds in Ontario, including outcomes related to the implementation of their programs and services.
5. Oversee and evaluate the financial performance of authorities to ensure their long-term operational and capital financial sustainability, including the financial sustainability of their programs and services required under section 21.1.
6. Guide and evaluate the strategic planning by authorities to ensure it aligns with provincial objectives.
7. Support the development and implementation of a standardized and centralized system for processing applications for permits issued by authorities.
8. Lead the development and implementation of digital strategies and shared services to support the operations of authorities, including their programs and services.
9. Support strategic investment in programs and services provided by authorities, including leveraging funding available to Ontario and authorities.
10. Advise the Government of Ontario in respect of the programs and services authorities provide under the Act and any matters related to the objects of the agency.
11. Any other objects prescribed by regulation.

# Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency – Agency tools & funding sources

The agency would provide province-wide coordination, strategic direction, and oversight of Ontario's CAs. Delivery of local programs and services would continue to be led by CAs.

## Proposed agency tools

- 1) Information requests
- 2) Binding directions and non-binding guidelines may address topics such as:
  - Key performance indicators, key results or service delivery targets
  - Service standards
  - Information technology
  - Procurement
  - Training of members and employees
  - Budgeting
  - Asset management plans
  - Strategic planning

## Proposed agency funding sources

- Provincial funding
- Fees for services
- Cost recovery from conservation authorities

## Ministerial oversight of agency directions to CAs:

- Agency must provide Minister with a copy of the proposed direction to a CA 45 days prior to issuing
- Within that 45 days, the Minister may require the agency to take any action in relation to the proposed direction (e.g., update, undertake additional consultation)
- Minister can set regulations on:
  - the process for the agency to set directions and/or
  - the things the agency is not allowed to set binding directions on

# Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency – Oversight

The proposed agency would be board-governed and arms-length of the province.

Proposed board governance:

- Board-governed with 5-12 board members, with one Chair and up to two Vice Chairs, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.
- The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall, in appointing members of the board of directors, take into consideration,
  - (a) their knowledge and experience in public administration, corporate governance and finance;
  - (b) their knowledge of programs and services provided by authorities; and
  - (c) such other matters as may be prescribed by regulation
- Appointments may be made for a term up to 3 years, and a person may not serve on the board for more than 9 years in total.
- The board of directors manages performance of the CEO, and may, by by-

# Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency – Agency Oversight

**MECP will provide oversight of the agency and will also retain policy responsibility for the *Conservation Authorities Act* and associated regulations.**

## **Provincial oversight of agency includes:**

- Agency must follow requirements under the provincial Agencies and Appointments Directives including an annual letter of direction.
- Every 3 years the agency must provide a report on its effectiveness, priorities and value for money.
- Minister can issue mandatory directives to agency, request information, and initiate/require a review or audit of the agency.
- Ministerial oversight of agency directions to CAs.

# **Proposal: Regional Consolidation of CAs**

# Regional consolidation of CAs – Consultation

- The government is consulting on the proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of the CAs with impacted stakeholders, municipalities, CAs, and Indigenous communities.
- A policy proposal notice is posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (Posting # 025-1257) for 45 days, from November 7 until December 22, 2025, inviting review and comments on criteria applied to determine proposed regional boundaries, the proposed geographical jurisdiction of each regional CA, and discussion questions which are relevant to the planning for the future state.
- Comments on the proposal may be submitted on the ERO or by email to: [ca.office@ontario.ca](mailto:ca.office@ontario.ca).

# Regional consolidation of CAs - Criteria

The proposed boundaries are based primarily on natural watershed systems, keeping existing CAs whole wherever possible and aligning with source protection regions to maintain strong connections to local hydrology and drinking water protection.

Regional CAs boundaries criteria:

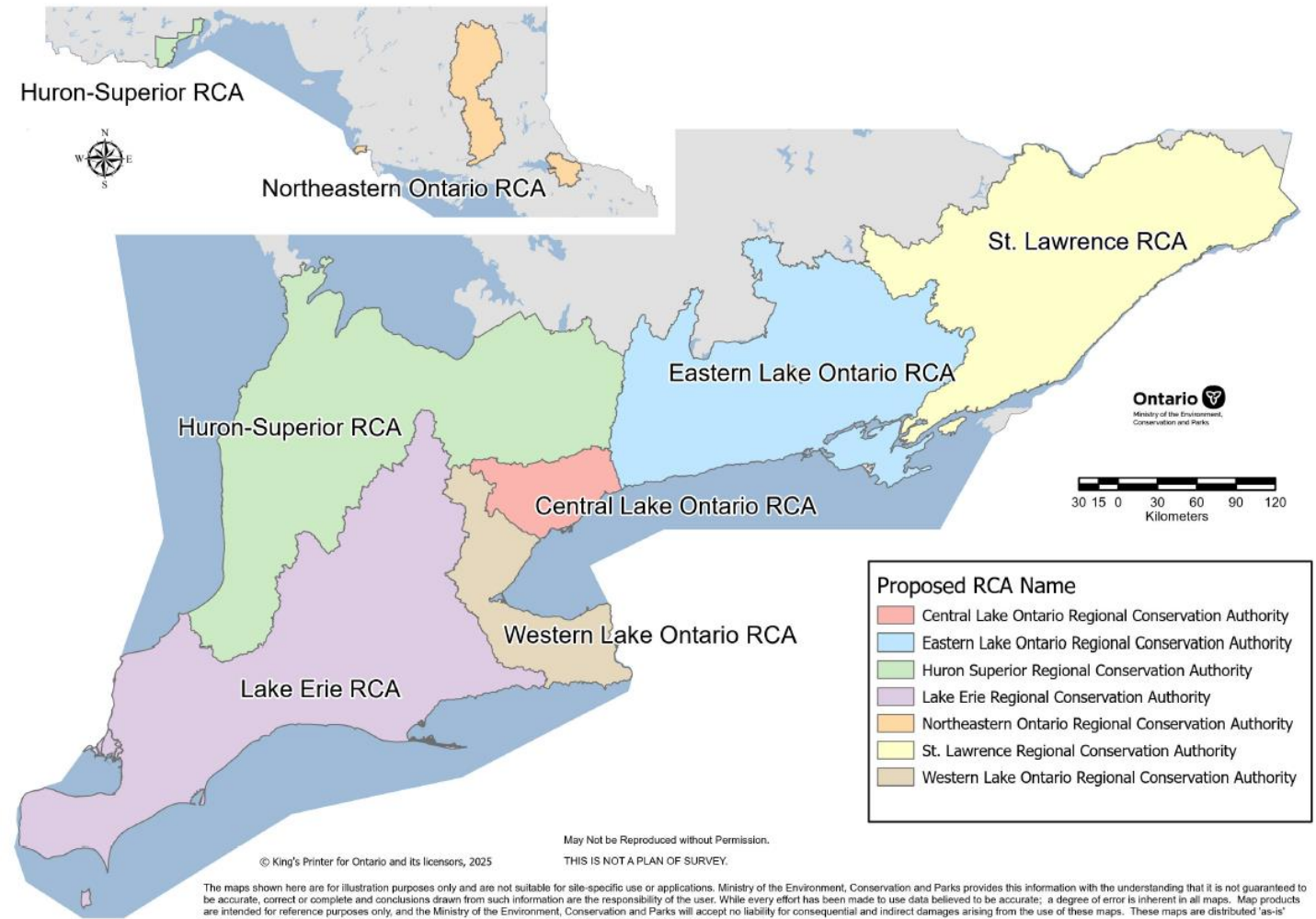
- **Maintaining watershed-based jurisdictions** - Aligning with natural hydrological boundaries to support effective flood and water management, consistent with drinking water source protection areas and regions.
- **Relationships between conservation authorities and municipalities** - Reducing administrative duplication and overlap for municipalities and conservation authorities to simplify accountability and strengthen local partnerships.
- **Balancing expertise and capacity across conservation authorities** - Enhancing technical skills and resources across conservation authorities to improve service and program delivery.
- **Service Continuity** - Ensuring uninterrupted delivery of local conservation authority programs - including flood forecasting and warning, permitting, and source water protection - through and after consolidation.

# Regional consolidation of CAs – Proposed RCAs

The government has proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's 36 CAs into 7 watershed-based regional CAs:

- Lake Erie Regional CA
- Huron Superior Regional CA
- Western Lake Ontario Regional CA
- Central Lake Ontario Regional CA
- Eastern Lake Ontario Regional CA
- St. Lawrence Regional CA
- Northeastern Ontario Regional CA

## PROPOSED 7 REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES (RCA)

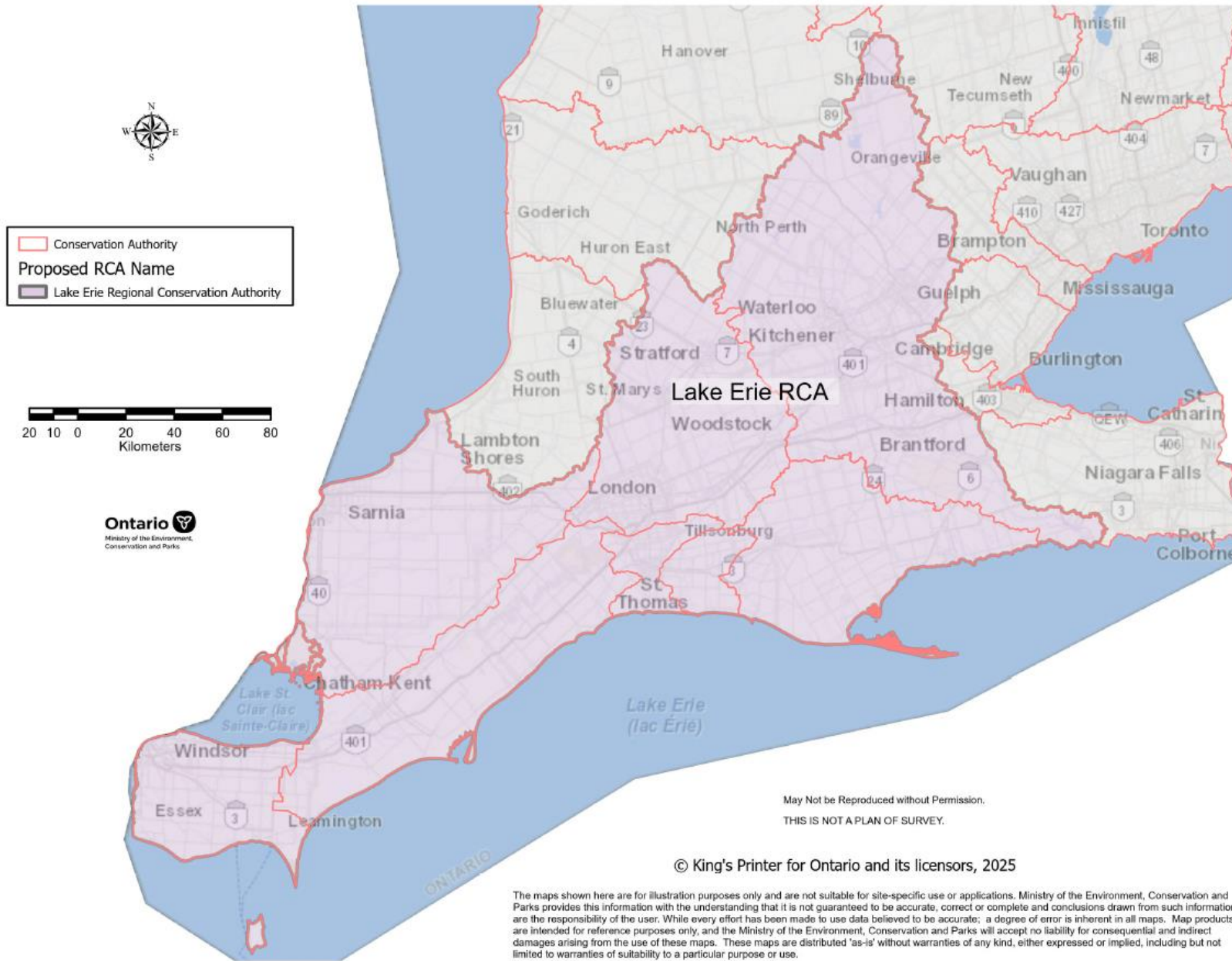


- No changes would be proposed to

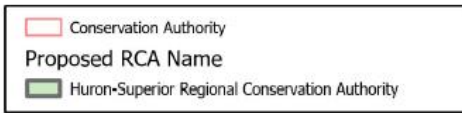
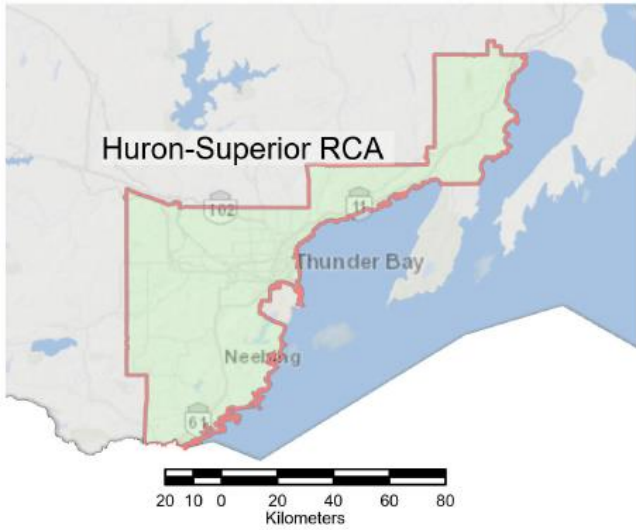
# PROPOSED LAKE ERIE REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Current CAs that would make up the proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Essex Region CA
- Lower Thames Valley CA
- St. Clair Region CA
- Upper Thames River CA
- Kettle Creek CA
- Catfish Creek CA
- Long Point Region CA
- Grand River CA



# PROPOSED HURON-SUPERIOR REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



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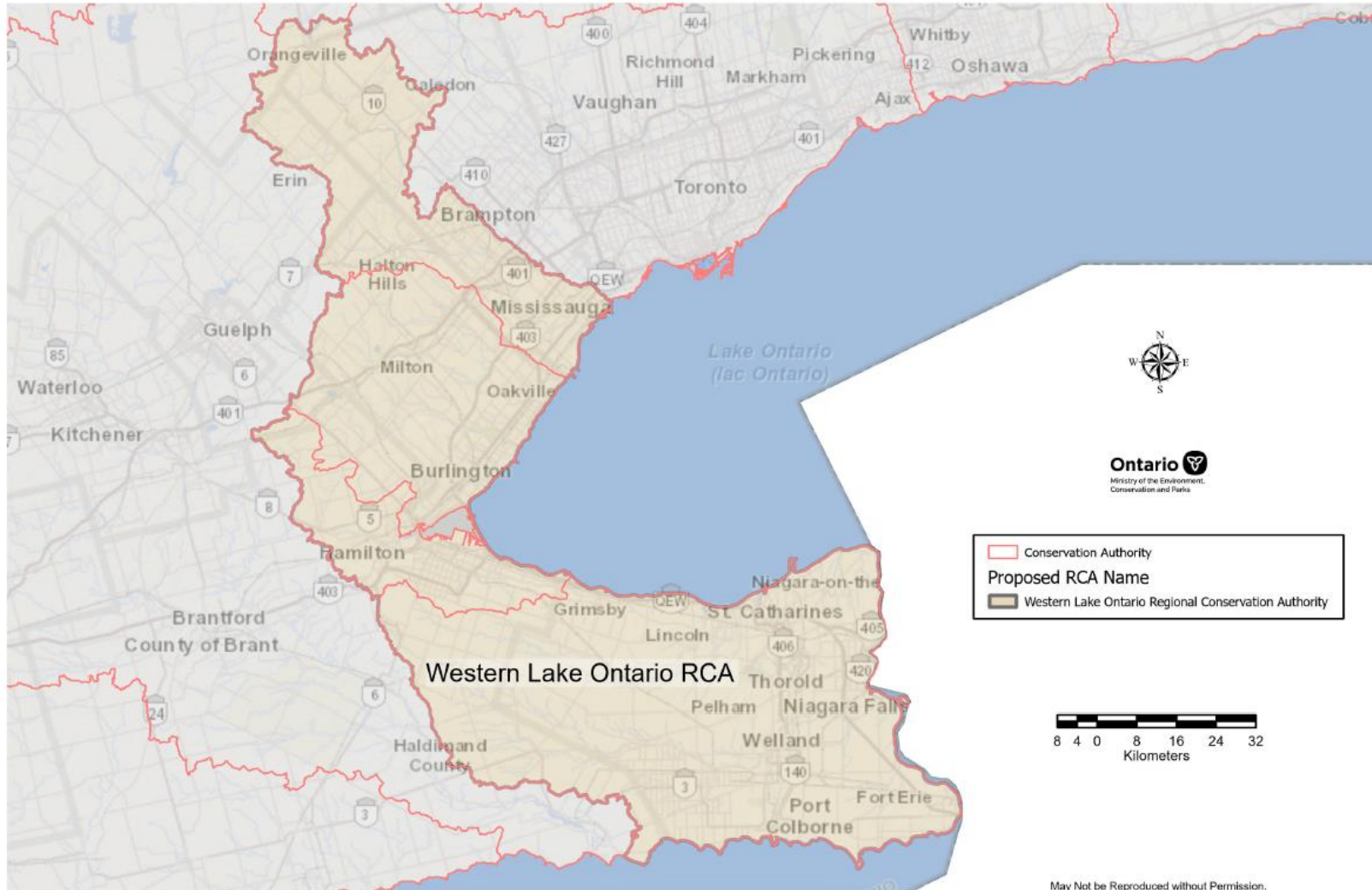
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Current CAs that would make up the proposed Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Ausable Bayfield CA
- Maitland Valley CA
- Saugeen Valley CA
- Grey Sauble CA
- Nottawasaga Valley CA
- Lake Simcoe Region CA
- Lakehead Region CA

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# PROPOSED WESTERN LAKE ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



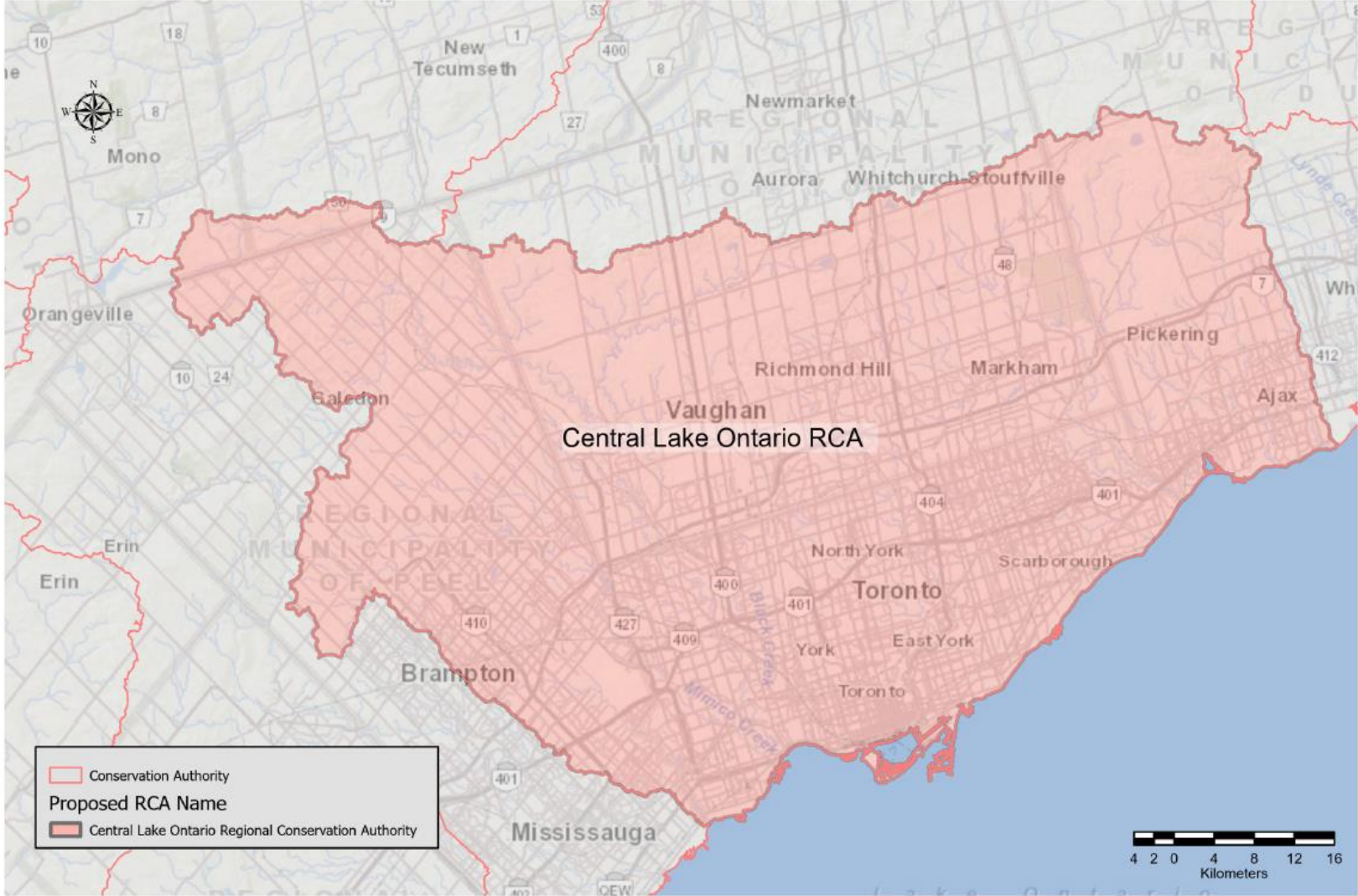
Current CAs that would make up the proposed Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Niagara Peninsula CA
- Hamilton Region CA
- Halton Region CA
- Credit Valley CA

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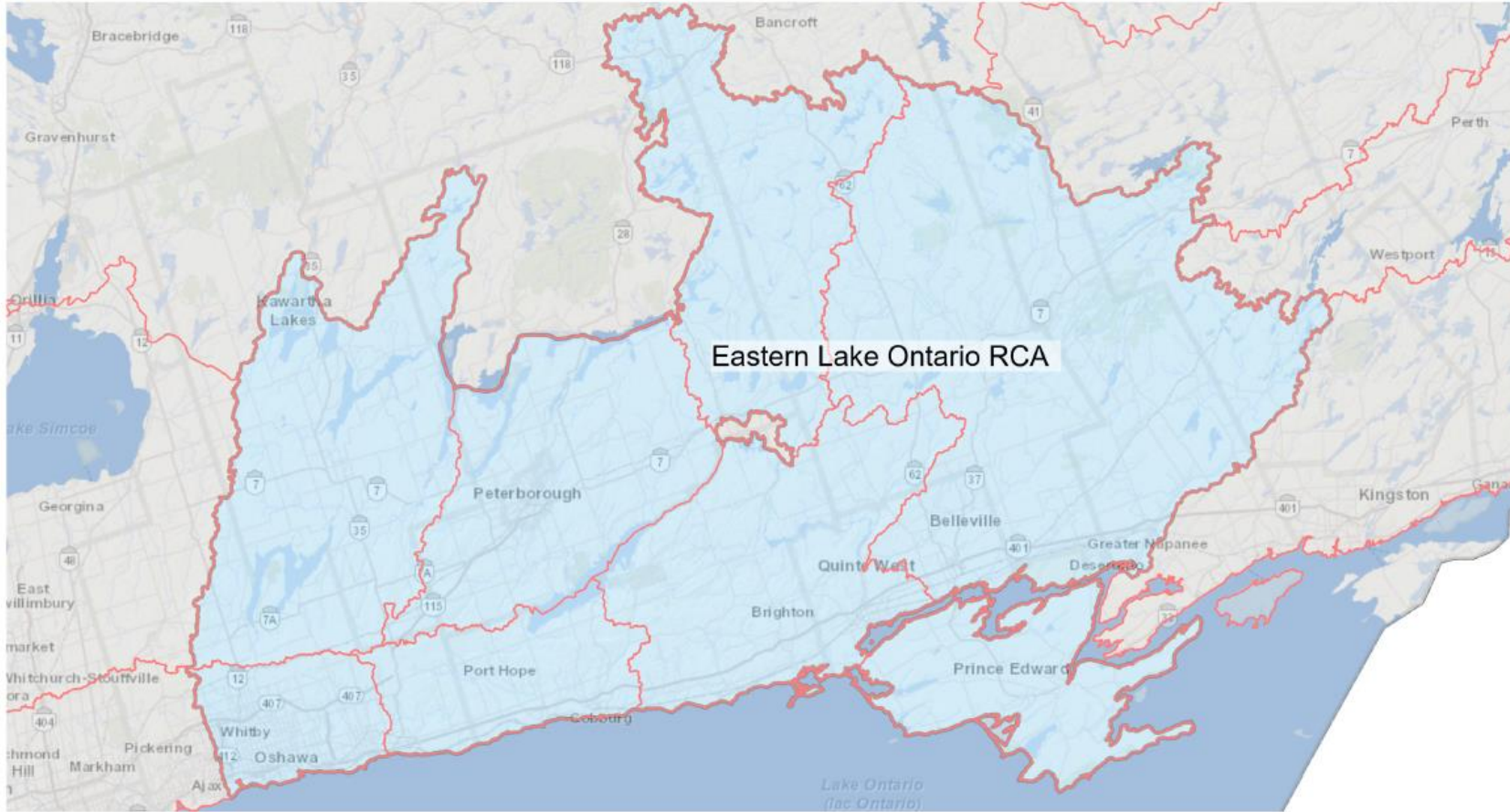
# PROPOSED CENTRAL LAKE ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



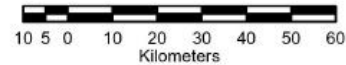
Current CAs that would make up the proposed Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Toronto and Region CA

# PROPOSED EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



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Current CAs that would make up the proposed Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

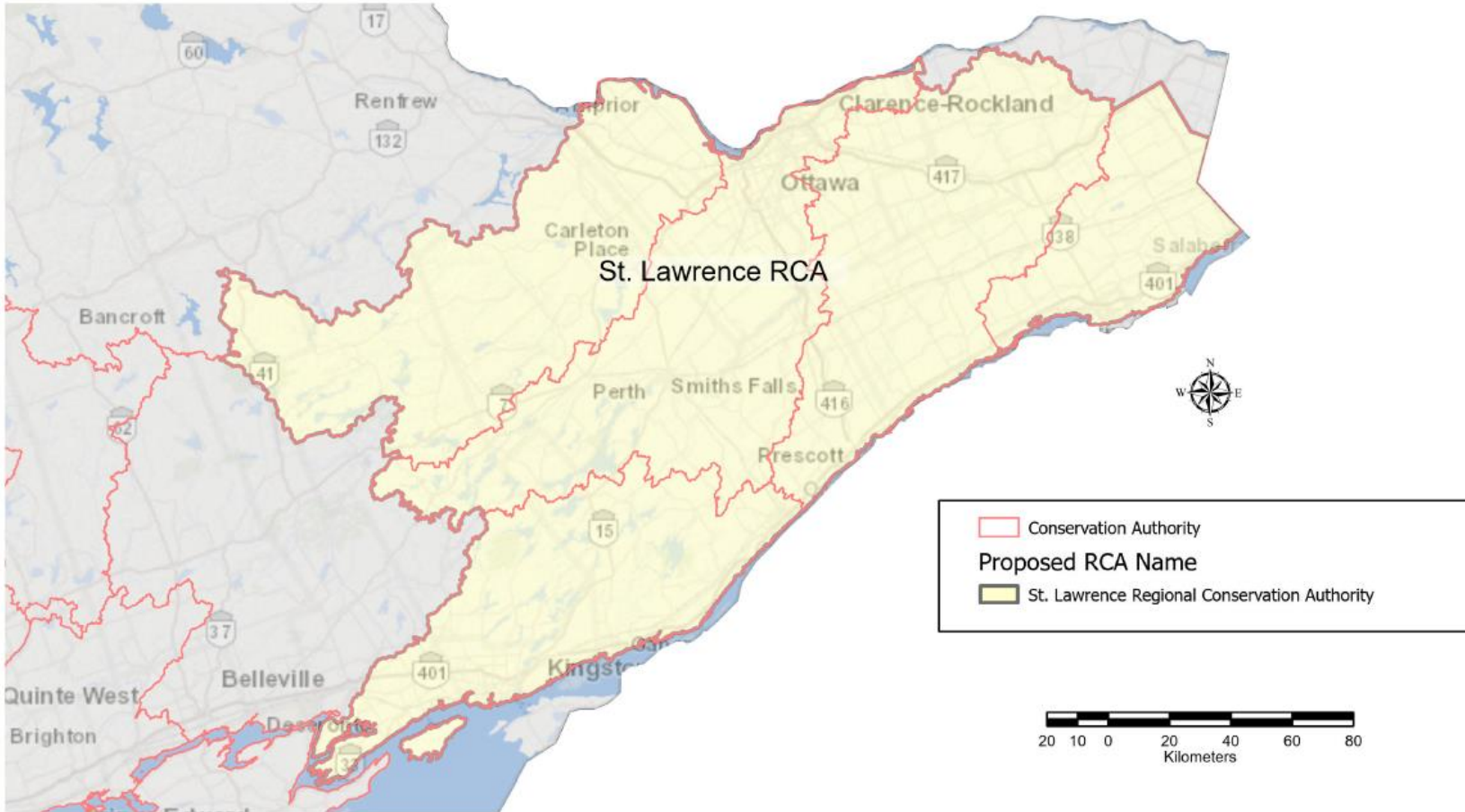
- Central Lake Ontario CA
- Kawartha Region CA
- Otonabee Region CA
- Ganaraska Region CA
- Lower Trent Region CA
- Crowe Valley CA
- Quinte Region CA

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# PROPOSED ST. LAWRENCE REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



Current CAs that would make up the proposed St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Cataraqui Region CA
- Rideau Valley CA
- Mississippi Valley CA
- South Nation River CA
- Raisin Region CA

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Conservation and Parks

# PROPOSED NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



Current CAs that would make up the proposed Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Nickel District CA
- Sault Ste. Marie Region CA
- Mattagami Region CA
- North Bay-Mattawa CA

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# Regional Consolidation – Looking Ahead

- MECP and the Office of the Chief Conservation Executive will consider all feedback received during the consultation on the proposed boundaries for regional consolidation and to inform the proposed path forward.
- MECP would undertake further consultation at a future date on any additional proposed legislative and regulatory changes needed to enable regional consolidation.
- The new agency would lead the transition to regional CAs with conservation authority, municipal and stakeholder involvement, including providing guidance support throughout the consolidation process, such as:
  - Develop a structured process and roadmap outlining steps of the consolidation process, including the common standards and tools for use across CAs.
  - Provide support/expertise for CAs on the organizational aspects of consolidation (e.g., governance, HR).
  - Provide provincial-level coordination to address system-wide issues that may arise, to mitigate risks of delays.
- Changes not intended to be initiated until after municipal elections in October **2026**; existing board members would continue to serve until the

# Group Discussion

- As a table, please spend the next 30 minutes discussing your two questions.
- Record answers in the workbook provided at your table.
- Following the table discussions, we'll come together as a group to share answers. Please select one person from your table to present your answers to the room.
- If you have extra time, feel free to move on to other questions found in the workbook.
- Your thoughts will help inform the next steps in regional consolidation.

# Discussion Questions



1. In the proposed regional model, can you tell us the best way to preserve local expertise and knowledge? Are there specific challenges or circumstances that need to be considered?
2. In your view, how could disruptions be avoided, and service standards maintained through the transition?
3. If you were designing the future governance structure for a regional conservation authority, what would it look like? For example, board size and composition, local representation, board appointments.
4. Please provide your thoughts on what must not be lost in consolidation – and what new strengths and capabilities may be gained through consolidation.
5. If we designed the next generation of watershed programs using the strengths of all 36 conservation authorities – what would we build first, and why?

# Thank you

**For more information and to comment:**

**Environmental Registry of Ontario (Posting # 025-1257):** Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities

**Consultation period:** 45 days – November 7, 2025 to December 22, 2025

Comments on the proposal may be submitted on the ERO or by email to: [ca.office@ontario.ca](mailto:ca.office@ontario.ca).