

ROMA 2026

Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
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MUNICIPALITY OF
West Grey



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With a population of over 13,500, the Municipality of West Grey is the largest geographic municipality in Grey County (876 square kilometres), with the River Styx and Saugeen River being the connecting links between our rural communities of Elmwood, Durham, Neustadt and Ayton.

Benefits of Proposed Changes to *Conservation Authorities Act*

West Grey acknowledges and supports some of the proposed changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

- Faster and more predictable approvals by creating single digital permitting processes and establishing clear, province-wide performance standards.
- Focusing core mandate of Conservation Authorities (CAs) on protection of people and property from natural hazards.
- Better access to shared resources including floodplain mapping and data management systems.
- Reducing the financial burden on developers to assist in the creation of more affordable housing options.

Potential Challenges for Rural Municipalities Due to Proposed Changes to *Conservation Authorities Act*

- Consolidation of CAs (from 36 to 7) may erode local accountability and representation on governing boards, and larger communities may overshadow smaller municipalities.
- Changes propose placing new and/or extra responsibilities for natural hazards and resource management onto municipalities who are unprepared and under-resourced to handle them.
- Large-scale amalgamation could divert resources away from front-line services that rural areas rely on CAs to provide (i.e. flood forecasting, emergency response), with the distant bureaucracy of amalgamated CAs being less responsive to local needs.
- Loss of niche insights and historic/institutional knowledge related to localized issues and concerns.

Our Asks: That any changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* ensure equitable policy development that provides an avenue for local representation, consideration of the specific needs of rural communities, and provides provincial funding support for service delivery.

- Assurance that rural areas aren't disadvantaged by the consolidation of CAs, which could shift focus away from local/rural needs.
- Development of clear mandates for new regional bodies that prioritize flood mitigation and natural hazard relevant to rural areas.
- A permitting process that remains efficient and provides timely responses to municipalities and stakeholders in rural Ontario.
- Assurance from the Province that the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency will not be funded by the municipal portion of Conservation Authority levies.
- A funding formula that provides an equitable share of support (both human and financial) to rural areas of the province.