



December 11, 2025

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Conservation and Source Protection Branch
300 Water Street North tower, 5th floor
Peterborough, ON K9J 3C7

Sent via Environmental Registry of Ontario: Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

To whom it may concern,

Re: *Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities*

Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the *Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities*. BFO represents the 19,000 beef farmers in Ontario by advocating in the areas of sustainability, animal health and care, environment, food safety, and domestic and export market development.

Within the BFO Strategic Plan (2023–2027), we have prioritized enabling community pasture expansion, improvement, and revitalization through collaboration with conservation authorities. BFO recently met with Minister Todd McCarthy to discuss the Lambton Community Pasture pilot project within the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and the positive progress being made. Currently, livestock are permitted on only a limited number of conservation lands. However, cattle play a vital role in maintaining biodiversity and supporting overall land health through rotational grazing, carbon sequestration, and the creation of wildlife habitat. We are hopeful that a potential mandate change—one that recognizes the value of including livestock groups alongside other sectors—will open the door for additional pasture opportunities with conservation authorities across the province.

Within the proposed boundaries, it is important to acknowledge the various regions as they have diverse geographical landscapes, which can vary significantly from one area to another. These differences are evident in the rivers and waterways that run within the agricultural, natural, and urban environments, creating unique needs and challenges across the regions. Recognizing these differences reinforces the importance of preserving local expertise and knowledge within these proposed boundaries.

The governance structure should incorporate dedicated rural representation—preferably an individual with expertise in agriculture or livestock—either through a seat on the board or through meaningful participation in key decision-making processes. This will help ensure that rural perspectives are fairly and transparently reflected in conservation authority decisions.

Conservation authorities can maintain and strengthen relationships with local communities and stakeholders by maintaining an active presence within the regions and gaining a comprehensive understanding of their diverse needs and challenges. Conservation authorities hold a critical role in the building permit process for farmers, which includes encompassing responsibilities such as reviewing applications, conducting site inspections, and determining the approval or denial of permits. It is essential to clarify how this process will be implemented in practice given these new boundaries to assess whether this will affect the efficiency or timeline of permit approvals.

With the proposed boundaries, BFO also recommends having a clear governance structure that is transparent to ensure all stakeholder voices are heard. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate on the development of criteria that is clear, consistent, and practical for farmers, and we remain committed to working alongside government and conservation partners to protect both biodiversity and agricultural sustainability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig McLaughlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Craig" and last name "McLaughlin" clearly distinguishable.

Craig McLaughlin
President