

Grand River Conservation Authority Transition Plan

Date: November 26, 2021

Amendments:

Background

In 2015, the Province initiated a review of the *Conservation Authorities Act*. Since then, Bill 139 (2017), Bill 108 (2019) and Bill 229 (2020) have been passed that included several amendments to the Act. The purpose of these amendments are to provide greater transparency, consistency, accountability and governance for Conservation Authorities. On October 4, 2021 the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) released the Phase 1 regulations to implement a portion of the amendments that were made to the *Conservation Authorities Act*. *Ontario Regulation 687/21: Transition Plans and Agreements for Programs and Services* was part of this grouping and requires the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) to have a Transition Plan that outlines the steps to be taken to develop an inventory of programs and services and to enter into agreements with participating municipalities to fund municipal driven programs and services through a levy. It also establishes the transition period and timelines to enter into those agreements.

The purpose of the Transition Plan is to prepare the GRCA and participating/watershed municipalities for the change to the budgeting process based on the delivery and funding of the three categories of programs and services. These categories include:

1. mandatory programs and services where municipal levy could be used without any agreement;
2. programs and services subject to municipal approval and municipal funding through a MOU;
3. other programs and services an Authority determines are advisable, with alternate funding (e.g., provincial, federal, municipal agreement and/or self-generated revenue)

Under Regulation 687/21, the transition period is to be completed no later than January 1, 2024.

There are two main components to the transition period. The first part is to develop a Transition Plan which consists of a workplan/timeline for the completion of major milestones during the transition period, process of consulting and negotiating with municipalities on Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) for the delivery of municipal requested programs and services and a draft inventory of programs and services offered by the GRCA. This Transition Plan is to be completed and submitted to MECP no later than December 31, 2021 and posted to the GRCA's website.

A final version of the inventory for programs and services is required to be circulated to participating municipalities and submitted to the MECP no later than February 28, 2022. The inventory for programs and services must also be posted to the GRCA's website.

The second part of the transition period includes developing, , negotiating and finalizing agreements (MOUs) with municipalities in accordance with the regulation for municipal programs and services. These agreements must be in place (Municipal Council and the General Membership approved) by January 1, 2024.

General Membership of the GRCA Approval Process

The General Membership of the GRCA is required to approve the Transition Plan and the Inventory of Programs and Services prior to the submission to MECP, circulation to municipalities and posting on the GRCA's website.

Recognizing the amount of work and input required by the GRCA to meet the transition date of January 1, 2024, the General Membership established an Ad-Hoc Governance Committee (Resolution No. 21-03 -January 22, 2021) to provide input and direction to staff on adapting to the changes of the *Conservation Authorities Act* and subsequent Regulations. This committee will meet regularly throughout the transition period.

Tracking of negotiations and milestones throughout the transition period will be provided to the Ad-hoc Committee for consultation and to the General Membership for approval. These quarterly reports will then be submitted to MECP and posted to the GRCA's website. Once the MOUs are approved by the General Membership and Municipal Council, these agreements will be made available to the public on the GRCA website.

The final submission report to MECP will contain all approved MOUs and the final Inventory of Programs and Services. This submission is due on January 31, 2024 and is the end of the transition period. The 2024 GRCA budget will reflect the revised funding framework.

Municipal Consultation Process

The GRCA has 38 watershed municipalities and 22 participating municipalities within its jurisdiction. Participating municipalities contribute to the general levy and also appoint members to the GRCA Board of Directors. The following are designated under the *Conservation Authorities Act* as GRCA participating municipalities:

- Town of Grand Valley
- Township of Amaranth
- Township of Melancthon
- Township of East Garafraxa
- Township of Southgate
- Township of Mapleton
- Township of Wellington North
- Township of Centre Wellington
- Town of Erin
- Township of Guelph/Eramosa
- Township of Puslinch
- City of Guelph
- Region of Waterloo
- Municipality of North Perth
- Township of Perth East
- Halton Region
- City of Hamilton
- Oxford County
- County of Brant
- City of Brantford
- Haldimand County
- Norfolk County

All participating municipalities will be circulated a copy of the approved GRCA Transition Plan.

Consultation with the participating municipalities will be ongoing throughout the transition period. Key contacts and timelines/meetings will be established with all participating municipalities and other interested watershed municipalities. Input received through these discussions and negotiations will be incorporated into the Inventory of Programs and Services on a continuous basis. GRCA staff will also be available to attend any council meeting, where requested.

Adjacent Conservation Authority Consultation Process

The GRCA shares municipal boundaries with 10 adjacent Conservation Authorities. It will be important to maintain contact and consult with senior staff at adjacent Conservation Authorities during the development of their Transition Plans, Inventory of Programs and Services and also when negotiating MOUs with shared municipalities. Wherever possible, staff will strive for consistency amongst the adjacent Conservation Authorities on terminology, conditions of agreements, etc.

The GRCA shares municipal boundaries with the following Conservation Authorities:

- Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
- Credit Valley Conservation
- Niagara Conservation Authority
- Hamilton Conservation Authority
- Conservation Halton
- Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority
- Grey Sauble Conservation
- Saugeen Conservation
- Upper Thames Conservation Authority
- Long Point Conservation Authority

Timelines and Deliverables during the Transition Period

Chart 1 and 2 provide a list of activities, deliverables and points of contact that the GRCA will complete in order to come into conformance with the new regulations. Any changes to timelines will require consultation with the Ad-hoc Committee, approval from the GRCA General Membership and identification/justification in the quarterly reports submitted to the MECP. Should the GRCA require an extension to the transition period, a request must be submitted to MECP prior to October 1, 2023 and approved by the General Membership.

End of Transition Period

As of January 1, 2024 all required MOUs will be in place and the new funding framework will be incorporated into the GRCA 2024 budget. The transition period will end unless the GRCA has requested an extension from the MECP.

A final report is to be submitted to MECP and each participating municipality by January 31, 2024 including the final version of the Inventory of Programs and Services and confirmation that the GRCA has entered into all necessary cost apportioning agreements. This final report will also be posted on the GRCA website.