

Board Meeting Highlights

May 23, 2025

Presentations:

a) 2024 Draft Audited Financial Statement

The Conservation Authority's auditor, Mr. Adam Delle Cese of BDO Canada LLP, provided an overview of the Conservation Authority's 2024 Audit and 2024 Draft Audited Financial Statements. He advised that BDO Canada LLP has audited the Conservation Authority's financial statements and noted that it is the opinion of BDO that financial statements included in the agenda present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority as at December 31, 2024, and its results of operations and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

b) Transformation 2022–2024: Final Strategic Plan Progress Report

CAO, Rob Baldwin, provided a final progress update on the Conservation Authority's Strategic Plan, **Transformation 2022-2024**, noting that this strategic plan was the first plan to shift emphasis to the outcomes we seek to achieve in the watershed. Instead of measuring success by what is done (outputs), we made a move towards measuring success by the actual difference we've made (outcomes).

Some noteworthy achievements in the last year of the plan through disciplined implementation included strong leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement, strengthened operational efficiency, and advanced critical initiatives, further solidifying our position as a solutions-driven leader among conservation authorities.

Some of the pivotal actions undertaken from 2022 to 2024 include:

- Investing in technology to enhance network and cyber security,
- Advancing programs and partnerships, linking the impacts of nature on human health,
- Progressing to construction on the new Nature Centre at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area,
- Leading in compliance under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act,
- Pioneering cutting-edge lake nutrient science and research,
- Pursuing multiple avenues of policy advocacy with government partners,
- Building business development opportunities into successful new Category 2 programs and generating new and sustainable sources of revenue, and
- Meeting all legislative changes under Bills 229 and 23.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Transformation 2022-2024 Strategic Plan Final Report](#)

c) 2026 Budget Assumptions

General Manager, Corporate and Financial Services/CFO, Mark Critch, provided an overview of the Conservation Authority's proposed 2026 Budget Assumptions Staff recommended the following budget assumptions for 2026:

1. Base Levy (all categories); up to 2.00% (2025: 2.00%);
2. Inflation: up to 2.50% used only for applicable expenditures (2025: 2.50%);
3. COLA: up to 2.50% (2025: 3.00%) plus applicable step increases;
4. Infrastructure levy increase for Asset Management: up to 0.50% increase on all Category 1 levy (2025: 0.50%); this will be included in the 2.0% base funding increase;
5. New in 2026, Infrastructure levy for the Nature Centre: up to 0.50% increase in Category 1 Mandatory Levy only (2025: N/A); this will be included in the 1.0% new additional Category 1 Mandatory Levy;
6. Investment in Strategic Priorities: Up to \$84.9K or the equivalent of a 1.00% in Category 1 Mandatory Levy (2025: 0.00%); this will be included in the 2.0% base funding increase;
7. Up to 2 new FTEs in 2026, with possible additional fully funded from grants and/or fees; this will be funded in the 2.0% base increase; and
8. New in 2026: Special Levy for the new Nature Centre is another 1% on the Category 1 Mandatory Levy and an additional 2% on the Category 3 funding; these new levies will be on top of the 2.0% Base levy for 2026.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [2026 Budget Assumptions Presentation](#)

d) Determination 2025-2028, the Conservation Authority's Strategic Plan

CAO, Rob Baldwin, provided an overview of Determination 2025-2028, the Conservation Authority's new Strategic Plan, which was carried out in-house, an approach that reduces costs, assists in establishing realistic and achievable performance metrics and measures, and places emphasis on the critical ground-level knowledge and experience of staff, while creating a greater sense of connection to the Conservation Authority's vision, mission, values and strategic directions and objectives. Through consultation with all levels of Conservation Authority staff, as well as the Board of Directors, it was evident that the directions and objectives outlined in Transformation 2022-2024 remain relevant to current business. Therefore, only a targeted update was required to align the strategic objectives with the changes experienced by the Conservation Authority over the past three years.

The following five slightly modified Strategic Directions will continue to guide our planning, actions, and decisions as we move towards achieving our objectives, mission, and vision:

1. Champion Watershed Health and Climate Resilience
2. Drive Evidence-Based Decision Making
3. Create Awareness and Spark Passion and Action for Nature

4. Advance Organizational Effectiveness and Excellence
5. Nurture People and Talent

For each Strategic Direction, three Strategic Objectives have been established to assist in driving implementation and reporting.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Determination - 2025-2028 Strategic Plan](#)

For more on our new Strategic Plan, please click this link: www.LSRCA.on.ca/Determination

e) Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority's History and Role in Salt Management

Director, Watershed Science & Monitoring, Dave Lembcke, together with Manager, Watershed Plans and Strategies, Bill Thompson, provided an overview of the Conservation Authority's historical involvement and efforts to date on the issue of salt management in the Lake Simcoe watershed. The Conservation Authority has been responsible for the collection of chloride samples in the watershed since the 1980s. Chloride concentrations in the surface waters of the Lake Simcoe watershed have continued to increase due to the use of winter salt on roads and parking lots, a trend not unique to the Lake Simcoe watershed that is mirrored in the lakes and streams in much of southern Ontario and the northeastern United States. In Lake Simcoe itself concentrations have shown consistent increases since the 1970s with concentrations currently sitting at approximately 61mg/l. While this concentration is below the Canadian Water Quality Guideline of 120mg/l, this threshold will be crossed if the current trend continues.

In the tributaries, a similar increasing trend is observed at most monitoring stations on both urban and rural rivers. In urban rivers, most of the sampled concentrations sit above the chronic guideline of 120 mg/l with a number of sampled concentrations exceeding the acute guideline of 640mg/l. At concentrations in excess of the acute guideline, lethal effects can occur for some aquatic species. Decreasing the amount of winter salt use throughout the watershed is critical to the long-term health of Lake Simcoe but more immediately critical to the ecological health of the urban streams and rivers.

For over 20 years, the Conservation Authority has been involved in and led numerous initiatives to bring awareness to this increasing trend. Some of these initiatives include:

- co-authoring a paper in the Water Quality Research Journal of Canada;
- hosting a workshop for municipal roads staff;
- keeping the dialogue open through the Lake Simcoe Salt Working Group;
- co-hosting the International Great Lakes Chloride Forum;
- producing design guidelines for new parking lots to ensure future developments are designed with winter maintenance in mind;
- convening and chairing the Ontario Freshwater Roundtable and leading the development of the Freshwater Roundtable's discussion paper on barriers to adoption of better winter

maintenance practices in the private sector and provided recommendations to overcome them;

- promoting the need to adopt the New Hampshire model of providing liability limitation to trained and certified winter maintenance contractors;
- completing case studies on the implementation of best practices for both public roads and private parking lots;
- co-hosting a Salt Forum with Landscape Ontario, Conservation Ontario, City of Guelph and others to re-engage the private sector and the Province on discussions on regulation change to reduce liability;
- partnering with Toronto Metropolitan University through Lake Simcoe Protection Plan funding to assess climate influence on road salt application rates and engaging municipal roads managers to assess potential changes in practice related to service level expectations; and
- participating on a panel at Ontario Good Roads conference discussing the intersection of salt, road safety, liability and environmental impact and the limited liability approach as a win-win solution.

The Conservation Authority was the first Canadian winner of the Chloride Reduction Leadership Award, presented at an international chloride conference in Minnesota in recognition of the broad coalition staff have built on the topic.

In November 2023, staff presented to the Conservation Authority's Board of Directors on findings and trends in Chloride concentrations within tributaries and the lake, as well as efforts on best practice and policy advocacy including the limited liability framework. Following the meeting, the Staff Report and template resolution were circulated to watershed municipalities. A letter was also then sent by the Conservation Authority Chair and Chief Administrative Officer to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, as well as all watershed Members of Provincial Parliament, outlining the need for and benefits of a limited liability approach. Senior Conservation Authority staff have engaged provincial counterparts to highlight the importance of this issue and the potential win-win scenario that a limited liability framework could bring. Both the former and current Conservation Authority CAOs have met with the previous and current Ministers of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, as well as the Attorney General to discuss the success experienced in New Hampshire and advocate for a similar framework in Ontario.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Chloride in the Lake Simcoe Watershed](#)

Staff Reports:

2024 Draft Audited Financial Statement

The Board received Staff Report No. 15-25-BOD regarding the Conservation Authority's 2024 Draft Audited Financial Statements and approved the 2024 Draft Audited Financial Statements and the Appropriations to and from Reserves as outlined in Schedule 8 – Statement of Continuity of Reserves of the 2024 Draft Audited Financial Statements. The 2024 Audited Financial Statements are to be distributed to the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Conservation Authority's banker and made available on the Conservation Authority's website.

Transformation 2022–2024: Final Strategic Plan Progress Report

The Board received Staff Report No. 16-25-BOD regarding the progress made on the Conservation Authority's Strategic Plan: **Transformation 2022-2024**.

2026 Budget Assumptions

The Board approved Staff Report No. 17-25-BOD regarding the Conservation Authority's recommended budget assumptions for the 2026 fiscal year.

Determination 2025-2028, the Conservation Authority's Strategic Plan

The Board received Staff Report No. 18-25-BOD regarding the completion of Determination 2025-2028 and approved the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority's Strategic Plan.

Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority's History and Role in Salt Management

The Board received Staff Report No. 19-25-BOD regarding the Conservation Authority's history and role in road salt management in both the public and private sectors and approved an amended recommendation whereby staff are to prepare a draft resolution for the Board's consideration at their July 2025 meeting to highlight the compelling and urgent data collected by the Conservation Authority on rising levels of chloride in the Lake Simcoe watershed. Staff were directed to continue collaborating with and supporting Provincial staff and Ministers to advance a limited liability approach for Ontario.

Offsetting Program Results - Reconciliation to December 31, 2024

The Board received Staff Report No. 20-25-BOD regarding a reconciliation of the Conservation Authority's Offsetting Cash in Lieu funds and Key Performance Indicators.

Shared Services - Strengthening among Conservation Authority Foundations

The Board received Staff Report No. 21-25-BOD regarding the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation's shared services offering to strengthen Conservation Authority Foundations.

For more information or to see the full agenda package, visit [LSRCA's Board of Directors' webpage](#).