

January 26, 2026

The Honourable Todd McCarthy
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3
Sent by email: minister.mecp@ontario.ca

Dear Minister McCarthy,

On behalf of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), thank you for taking the time to meet with our delegation during the 2026 ROMA Conference. We appreciate your willingness to engage directly with Northern municipal leaders and to hear our perspectives on environmental protection, conservation, and Extending Producer Responsibility to the ICI Sector

Firstly, FONOM supports the Province's objectives of improving efficiency, consistency, and predictability in approvals while maintaining strong environmental protections. We recognize the importance of modernizing systems to support economic growth, infrastructure development, and environmental stewardship, particularly amid global uncertainty.

That said, we respectfully emphasize that **Northern Ontario presents unique circumstances** that must be meaningfully reflected in the Province's consultation and implementation approach. The sheer geographic size of Northern Ontario, lower population density, limited municipal capacity, and the central role Conservation Authorities play in flood control, watershed management, erosion prevention, and emergency response mean that "one-size-fits-all" solutions risk unintended consequences for Northern communities.

Local Conservation Authorities in the North possess deep, place-based knowledge of their watersheds and maintain strong working relationships with municipalities, Indigenous communities, and local stakeholders. These relationships are critical to timely decision-making, public trust, and effective responses during flood events and natural hazards. Municipalities are concerned that large-scale regional consolidation could weaken this local expertise and accountability—particularly where governance structures span vast and diverse territories.

We are also hearing increasing concern from Conservation Authority boards and staff regarding uncertainty, workforce stability, and long-term service continuity. In Northern Ontario, where recruiting and retaining specialized staff is already challenging, prolonged uncertainty can destabilize both organizations and the municipalities they serve.

In this context, FONOM respectfully requests **enhanced and targeted consultation with Northern municipalities and Conservation Authorities** as the Province considers next steps on Conservation Authority transformation. In particular, we encourage:

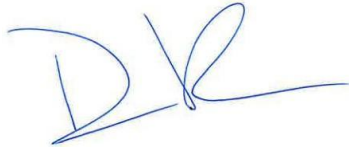
- Dedicated Northern Ontario consultation sessions that recognize regional realities and capacity constraints;

- Clear communication on governance, funding, and transition planning to support service continuity;
- Consideration of phased or regionally tailored implementation approaches where appropriate; and
- Continued municipal involvement and oversight to preserve local expertise and community trust.

We believe that working collaboratively with municipalities, Conservation Authorities, Indigenous partners, and the Province will lead to a more resilient and effective CA system one that achieves provincial objectives while continuing to serve communities on the ground.

Thank you again for your engagement with FONOM and for the opportunity to share Northern Ontario's perspective. We would welcome the opportunity to continue this dialogue and to participate in further discussions as this work moves forward.

Sincerely,



Dave Plourde
President, FONOM