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Town of Aurora

Memorandum

Councillor Thompson

Re: Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of December 5, 2025

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Councillor Michael Thompson

Date: January 13, 2026

Recommendation

1. That the memorandum regarding Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of December 5, 2025, be received for information.

Attachments

1. Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of December 5, 2025

Board Meeting Highlights

December 5, 2025

Deputations:

a) Responding to Water Soldier in Lake Simcoe

Mr. Colin Cassin, Executive Director, Invasive Species Centre, made a deputation on behalf of the Lake Simcoe Water Soldier Working Group regarding Water Soldier in Lake Simcoe. The Working Group is a collaborative effort to support water soldier surveillance, monitoring and response in Lake Simcoe, and to explore options to reduce impacts of this new plant. Water soldier, he noted, is an aquatic invasive species native to Europe and Northwest Asia first detected in North America in the Trent-Severn Waterway in 2008. In 2024, approximately 40 floating plants were detected in Lake Simcoe around Young's Harbour. The initial shoreline survey at that time determined it was a large, well-established mass limited to Cook's Bay.

Monitoring efforts in 2025 found 450 hectares of water soldier in Cook's Bay, and while it's currently contained to Cook's Bay, the risk of spreading is increasing, and action is essential to prevent further expansion. Mr. Cassin went on to note that for 2026, an integrated management plan is needed that includes prevention, detection, monitoring, management options and funding. In closing, he noted that new members to the Working Group are encouraged and welcome. Continued outreach with the public, key stakeholders, and rights holders is necessary, and anyone interested in joining this Working Group may email Katie Church kchurch@invasivespeciescentre.ca. To view this presentation, please click this link: [Responding to Water Soldier in Lake Simcoe](#)

Presentations:

a) Third Quarter 2025 Financial Report and Year-end Forecast

Director, Finance, Katherine Toffan, provided an overview of the Third Quarter 2025 Financial Report and Year-end Forecast, noting highlights include an overall operational surplus of \$185K, about 1.2% of the overall operating budget. This is down from the second quarter surplus of 300K, and it's expecting this surplus will continue to narrow towards the end of the year. Main drivers are in Corporate Services related to gapping and lower expenses. A variance in Development Services reflects what is seen in the market. The volume of new planning applications and permits is down, and a decrease in applications of 30-40% overall by end of year is forecasted. This variance in fees is being offset with deferral of expenses and a pause on filling open positions. Lower than budgeted consulting expenses for the review of stormwater guidelines and offsetting policies are the result of staff determining that some of this work can be completed internally rather than engaging external support. Legal expenses are also down in 2025 as there are fewer open cases.

Ms. Toffan noted that most projects are on track. The largest variance is in offsetting projects; however, it is anticipated that an additional \$1.7M will be spent by year-end on offsetting projects. Highlights of the year-end Forecast include an overall operational deficit of approximately \$50K, down from \$186K at the second quarter. To view this presentation, please click this link: [Third Quarter 2025 Financial Update and Forecast](#)

b) Phosphorus Loads to Lake Simcoe Update - 2021-2023

Director, Watershed Science and Monitoring, David Lembcke, provided an overview of the 2021-2023 Phosphorus Loads Report, noting the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan is focused on restoring a healthy and sustainable cold-water fish community in Lake Simcoe, and to help achieve this goal, the target of 7 mg/L dissolved oxygen at the end of summer was set. He explained the connection between phosphorus loads and dissolved oxygen in a lake, where decomposing plants and algae use up dissolved oxygen, and the amount of algae present in the lake is controlled to some extent by in-lake phosphorus levels. Phosphorus levels are in-turn controlled by phosphorus loading. Accordingly, the target 7 mg/L of dissolved oxygen is linked to an ideal phosphorus loading goal of 44 tonnes per year. Phosphorus loads have been monitored since the 1990s to track the total amount of phosphorus entering Lake Simcoe from all sources. The three most recently calculated hydrologic years are 2021 to 2023.

He went on to explain that a hydrologic year runs from June 1 of one year to May 31 of the next, and accordingly the newly calculated phosphorus loads cover the three hydrologic years of June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2024. The phosphorus load for these hydrologic years is 70 tonnes in 2021, 66.7 tonnes in 2022 and 77.3 tonnes in 2023, which are lower than the previous three-year period, where there was an average tonne of 83.2. The latest period represents a return to more typical loading conditions, although they still exceeded the 44 tonne/year goal established in the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan. For comparison, the long-term average total phosphorus load is 81.6 tonnes. Total tributary flows, which are a key component of the total phosphorus loads, were also typical throughout this period.

He also noted that climate change is altering when and how much phosphorus flows from tributaries. Staff are seeing higher phosphorus loads – and higher flows – during winter months due to increased snowmelt and rain-on-snow events, as well as during summer due to intense rainstorms. To view this presentation, please click this link: [Phosphorus Loads to Lake Simcoe 2021-2023](#)

c) Bill 68 and the Proposed Consolidation of Conservation Authorities

Chief Administrative Officer, Rob Baldwin, provided an overview of the Province's proposed consolidation of 36 conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities, noting the proposal includes amending the *Conservation Authorities Act* to create a provincial board-governed agency. This agency, the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, will provide province-wide coordination, shared digital and technical resources, and consistent practices to

strengthen the work of conservation authorities. Also proposed are boundaries for the consolidation of the existing 36 conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities. Some of the reasons cited for these changes include a patchwork of standards and service delivery; outdated and fragmented systems; administrative duplication, as well as the need for more accountability and transparency.

CAO Baldwin reviewed the list of what the Province has advised will not be changing, noting the local operations of each conservation authority will not be changing; current programs and services, as well as areas served, will remain unchanged. CAO Baldwin overviewed the objects of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, which has received Royal Assent. He reviewed the proposed boundaries, noting that Lake Simcoe will be consolidated with Nottawasaga Valley, Grey Sauble, Saugeen Valley, Maitland Valley, Ausable Bayfield, and Lakehead conservation authorities to form the Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority. More information may be found on the Environmental Registry of Ontario through <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/025-1257>

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Bill 68 and the Proposed Consolidation of Conservation Authorities](#)

Correspondence and Staff Reports:

Third Quarter 2025 Financial Report and Year-end Forecast

The Board received Staff Report No. 35-25-BOD regarding the Conservation Authority's Third Quarter 2025 Financial Report and Year-end Forecast.

Phosphorus Loads to Lake Simcoe Update - 2021-2023

The Board received Staff Report No. 36-25-BOD regarding the 2021-2023 Phosphorus Loads Report.

Scanlon Creek Nature Centre Construction and Project Budget Update

The Board received Staff Report No. 37-25-BOD regarding an update on the construction progress and project budget for the Scanlon Creek Nature Centre.

Projected Operating Costs for the new Nature Centre at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area

The Board received Staff Report No. 38-25-BOD regarding the projected operating costs for the new Nature Centre. These projected operating costs are to be incorporated into the draft 2026 Budget.

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