

Conservation Halton Client Service Standards Policy June 2024

Background

Under Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, Conservation Authorities are responsible for, among other things, managing risks related to natural hazards, including preventing and mitigating those risks. As part of delivering this mandate, Conservation Halton's (CH) Planning and Regulations Department is responsible for reviewing planning and development applications as:

- a regulatory agency under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*;
- a body with provincially delegated responsibilities acting on behalf of the province to ensure decisions under the *Planning Act* are consistent with the natural hazard policies of the Provincial Policy Statement and/or provincial plans; and,
- a body commenting on risks related to natural hazards arising from a proposal under the *Aggregate Resources Act*, *Drainage Act*, *Environmental Assessment Act*, and/or *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act*.

Under Part VI of the *Conservation Authorities Act* and Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits, CH regulates:

- activities to straighten, change, divert or interfere in any way with the existing channel of a river, creek, stream or watercourse;
- activities to change or interfere in any way with a wetland; and
- development activities in or adjacent to watercourses, valleylands, wetlands, Lake Ontario shoreline, hazardous lands, and lands adjacent to these features.

Permits are required from CH prior to undertaking any changes or interference with a watercourse or wetland or development activities within CH's regulated area. CH may issue a permit if the activity is not likely to affect the control of flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches, or unstable soil and bedrock and the activity is not likely to create conditions or circumstances that, in the event of a natural hazard, might jeopardize the health or safety of persons or result in the damage or destruction of property. Applications for development activities are reviewed under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, Ontario Regulation 41/24, and CH's Board-approved policies and requirements.

Our Commitment

CH's Planning and Regulations Department is committed to delivering person-centered service.

For permit applications, we are committed to:

- Return phone calls and inquiries within 1-2 business days;
- Engage in pre-consultation with applicants, where requested, to ensure that all CH application requirements are clear and understood by applicants;
- Notify applicants within 21 days regarding the completeness of their permit application;
- Provide clear submission guidelines for technical studies and reports;
- Ensure regulatory screening maps are understood;
- Keep permit applicants informed regarding the status of their application;
- Provide timely reviews and approvals;
- Review technical documents/submissions within 6 weeks;
- Approve minor permits that meet policy requirements within 30 days and major permits

that meet policy requirements in 90 days;

- Track review and approval times for permits; and
- Seek continuous process improvements.

For planning applications, we are committed to:

- Return phone calls and inquiries within 1-2 business days;
- Work with municipal staff to streamline plan review processes;
- Participate actively in pre-consultation meetings;
- Provide clear submission guidelines for technical studies and reports;
- Provide timely reviews of planning applications and technical studies;
- Provide comments on planning applications to municipalities by the specified date due; and
- Review technical documents/submissions and provide technical comments to municipalities within 6 weeks;
- Track files and review times for specific planning applications; and
- Seek continuous process improvements with municipalities.

For public information and transparency, it is our policy to post the following to the CH website:

- CH Policy Document for the Administration and Implementation of the *Conservation Authorities Act* and Ontario Regulation 41/24, including current and subsequent Board-approved versions (www.conservationhalton.ca/policies-and-guidelines/)
- CH complete permit application requirement checklists (www.conservationhalton.ca/permitting/)
- Current CH Permit and Plan Review Fee Schedules (www.conservationhalton.ca/permitting-and-planning/)
- CH online regulatory screening mapping (www.conservationhalton.ca/mapping-and-studies/)
- CH Annual Report with permit and planning review timelines (www.conservationhalton.ca/about-us/annual-reports/)

For Issue Management on planning and permit files, it is our policy to apply the following protocol:

- The file manager or their supervisor will resolve file issues by working with the applicant/municipality to find solutions which are supported by CH policies;
- If a resolution is not achieved, the Director, Planning and Regulations, will act as the 'client service facilitator' to find solutions;
- If an applicant:
 - has not received notice from CH within 21 days of submitting an application as to whether it is a complete application;
 - is not satisfied with a decision on whether a permit application is deemed complete, or;
 - is of the view that a request by CH for information, studies or plans is not reasonable,the applicant can request an administrative review by the Director, Planning and Regulations and Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Executive Officer which shall be completed within 30 days after it is requested and is related to confirmation of complete application/administrative processes only and not a decision about whether the permit should be issued;
- If a decision on a permit application has not been rendered by CH within 90 days of a

- complete application, the applicant may file an appeal with the Ontario Land Tribunal;
- Any dispute of permit fee calculations that cannot be resolved through consultation with CH's Managers, Director of Planning and Regulations, and/or CAO/CEO's office, can be appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal; and
 - If CH does not issue a permit within the prescribed timelines or imposes any conditions on a permit to which the applicant objects, the applicant may, within 15 days of receiving reasons for CH's decision, submit a request to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for the Minister to review CH's decision.