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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Report PDD-11-2023 Grand River Conservation Authority and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority – 2023 Municipal Levy

For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 28, 2023

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### OBJECTIVE:

To advise Council of the upcoming Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) 2023 municipal levy budget, which requires funding from Haldimand County.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report PDD-11-2023 Grand River Conservation Authority and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority – 2023 Municipal Levy be received.

**Prepared by:** Shannon VanDalen, MCIP, RPP, Manager of Planning and Development

**Respectfully submitted:** Mike Evers, MCIP, RPP, BES, General Manager of Community & Development Services

**Approved:** Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Haldimand County has been provided with information outlining the proposed 2023 municipal levy for the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA). The GRCA sees a proposed increase of 4.5% over last years' levy and representing a \$8,124 increase, while the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) has an increase of 11.72% with a monetary value of \$28,685.

A protocol developed many years ago between Conservation Ontario and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario gives municipalities control over only the amount of discretionary nonmatching conservation authority levies to be set annually. These levies are set by the Authority Board and are allocated to member municipalities based on their share of assessment in the watershed. Appointees to each Authority are expected to vote on proposed Conservation Authority levies based on the direction of their respective Municipal Council. Staff are not recommending any specific direction be given to this municipality's appointees regarding the general levies proposed by the bot the Grand River and Niagara Peninsula conservation authorities for 2023.

### BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County funds three Conservation Authorities whose watersheds fall within this municipality's boundaries. The general levy for each Conservation Authority is apportioned to its watershed municipalities on the basis of a "modified current value assessment" model as set out in Ontario Regulation 670/2000.

The *Conservation Authorities Act* (the “Act”) requires Conservation Authorities to provide notice to their member municipalities regarding the coming year’s levies. Ontario Regulations 139/96 and 106/98 both state that 30 days notice must be provided to the municipality of a meeting being held by the Conservation Authority to approve the non-matching levy. The GRCA Board of Directors intends to vote on the 2023 budget at its February 24, 2023 meeting, while the NPCA budget was approved at its November 18, 2022 meeting.

The County’s share of the total general municipal levy apportionment for 2023 for the GRCA is 1.45%, and 1.86% for the NPCA and as reflected in these percentages, Haldimand County does not comprise the weighted majority membership in either conservation authority. As a result, there may be little control or influence that the County’s appointees can exert on the decisions of the authorities in setting their 2023 budget for the general levy component. Any proposed special levies are subject to the approval of only the benefiting municipality.

The increase is generally seen across all municipal levies from an Operation Levy perspective, with overall increases relating to rising inflation; a decrease of federal funding; and higher operation costs.

The table below shows the total impact of the municipal levy:

	<b>2022 Levy</b>	<b>2023 Levy</b>	<b>Increase (\$)</b>	<b>Increase (%)</b>
GRCA	\$180,063	\$188,187	\$8,124	4.5%
NPCA	\$131,117	\$159,802	\$28,685	11.7%

Included within the NPCA budget, Haldimand has a Special Levy of \$2,338 and a Land Securement Reserve Contribution of \$13,252. The special levy and land securement relate back to asset management and infrastructure upgrades required as well as watershed monitoring programs and hazardous tree removal and reforestation.

The 2023 Long Point Region Conservation Authority municipal levy was presented to Council-in-Committee at the December 6, 2022 meeting (Report PDD-50-2022), and noted a budget of \$324,284, which is an increase of 8.23% over the 2022 value of \$299,638.

Generally, appointees to each Conservation Authority are to vote on the proposed levy apportionment based on the direction of their respective Municipal Councils. Given the overall minor impact in costs to the County, staff have not recommended that any specific direction be given to Haldimand’s appointees regarding the 2023 levy proposed by the GRCA and NPCA. If Council supports this approach, this report need only be received as information; otherwise, specific direction by resolution should be given to the County’s appointees.

Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022, provided significant changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* including:

- Exemptions to transfer conservation authority regulatory responsibilities to municipalities;
- Proposed legislation that would prohibit CAs from entering into Memorandums of Understanding with municipalities for other services;
- Freezing of CA fees; and
- Development opportunities on sensitive natural areas and Wetland Offsetting policies.

However, it is noted that the changes through Bill 23 will not impact the municipal levy or budget apportionment. The core services provided by the conservation authorities under the municipal levy, such as regulation of natural hazards and flooding, development review relating to quantity control, and conservation park areas, will continue to be funded through the levy. The change will be seen in the conservation authority review on development applications for natural heritage and water quality. These types of reviews were previously addressed through user/applicant permits or applications.

## **FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

In the past, Haldimand County Council chose to allow each of its Board appointees to “vote their conscience” at the budget approval meetings. If the current Council supports the same approach, this report need only be received as information. Otherwise, specific direction by resolution should be given to the County’s appointees as to how they should vote on the upcoming Grand River Conservation Authority and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority 2023 Budget.

## **STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:**

Not applicable.

## **REPORT IMPACTS:**

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

## **REFERENCES:**

None.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. 2023 GRCA Municipal Levy Budget.
2. 2023 NPCA Municipal Levy Budget.