
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report PDD-29-2023 Conservation Authorities - 2024 Municipal Levy For Consideration by Council in Committee on December 12, 2023



OBJECTIVE:

To advise Council of the upcoming Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA) and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) 2024 municipal levy budget, which requires funding from Haldimand County.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report PDD-29-2023 Conservation Authorities - 2024 Municipal Levy be received.

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

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Haldimand County has been provided with information outlining the proposed 2024 municipal levy for all three (3) of the Conservation Authorities within the municipality - the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), the Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA) and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA). The GRCA sees a proposed increase of 2.5% over last years' levy which equates to \$4,632; the LPRCA is an increase of 3.44% which equates to \$11,159; while the NPCA is an increase of 1.14% which equates to \$1,828.

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 any of the three conservation authorities.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County funds three (3) Conservation Authorities whose watersheds fall within this municipality's boundaries, the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), the Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA) and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA). 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 hold its final vote on the 2024 budget at its February 23, 2024 meeting, while the LPRCA budget will be considered at its February 7, 2024 meeting. The NPCA budget was approved at its October 20th, 2023 meeting.

The County’s share of the total general municipal levy apportionment for 2024 for each conservation authority is as follows:

- GRCA - 1.45%
- LPRCA - 1.86%
- NPCA - 1.89%

As reflected in these percentages, Haldimand County does not comprise the weighted majority membership in any of the conservation authorities. 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 2024 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:

	2023 Levy	2024 Levy	Increase (\$)	Increase (%)
GRCA	\$188,187	\$192,819	\$4,632	2.5%
LPRCA	\$324,284	\$335,443	\$11,159	3.44%
NPCA	\$159,802	\$161,630	\$1,828	1.14%

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 2024 levy proposed by the GRCA, LPRCA or 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.

The levy values above represent both the Category 1 (Mandatory) and Category 2 (Non-Mandatory/Municipally requested) programs and services offered by the GRCA and NPCA. Council approved entering into service agreements with the GRCA and NPCA for Category 2 programs and services through report CDS-08-2023 (October 10th CIC). Those agreements have now been fully executed. A service agreement with the LPRCA will not be developed at this time as that organization does not have any Category 2 programs and services that require municipal partner funding.

Additionally, it is noted that the LPRCA budget also includes a proposed increase of 5% for the Planning Service User Fees for 2024. The LPRCA planning fees have been frozen at the 2022 rates and this would see an annualized increase of 2.5% including 2023. The User Fees are the fees required to be paid by the proponent/property owner and collected relating to the review of planning applications for proposed development within the regulated area. User Fees are also collected by the GRCA and NPCA, however those figures were not yet available at the time of the preparation of this report. For clarity, these increases do not impact the municipal levy.

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, Long Point Region Conservation Authority and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority 2024 Budget.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Not applicable.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2024 Draft GRCA Budget.
2. 2024 Draft LPRCA Budget.
3. 2024 Approved NPCA Budget.