
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report PDD-28-2024 Conservation Authorities 2025 Municipal Levies
For Consideration by Council in Committee on December 10, 2024



OBJECTIVE:

To advise Council of the upcoming 2025 Municipal Levies budget for the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA) and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA), which requires funding from Haldimand County.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report PDD-28-2025 Conservation Authorities 2025 Municipal Levies be received.

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

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Haldimand County has been provided with information outlining the proposed 2025 municipal levy for the three conservation authorities that operate within the municipality – the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), Long Point Region Conservation Authority (LPRCA) and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA). The GRCA sees a proposed increase of 4.1% over last years' levy, representing a \$7,923 increase; while the LPRCA sees an increase of 3.59% or \$12,034 from 2024; with the NPCA having the greatest jump of 14.42%, equaling a value of \$23,304.

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 non-matching 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 conservation authority are expected to vote on proposed 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 recognized conservation authorities for 2025 as they represent increases tied to rising inflation, a decrease of federal funding, and higher operation costs, with no unique or special projects proposed.

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 2025 budget at its February 28th, 2025 meeting, while the LPRCA budget will be considered at its January 8th, 2025 meeting. The NPCA budget was given preliminary approval at its October 18th, 2024 meeting.

The County’s share of the total general municipal CVA-based levy apportionment for 2025 for each conservation authority is as follows:

- GRCA – 1.46%
- LPRCA – 1.86%
- NPCA – 1.92%

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 2025 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:

	2024 Levy	2025 Levy (amount to be paid by County)	Increase (\$)	Increase (%)
GRCA	\$192,819	\$200,742	\$7,923	4.1%
LPRCA	\$335,443	\$347,476	\$12,034	3.59%
NPCA	\$161,630	\$184,934	\$23,304	14.42%

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 2025 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 increases proposed by the GRCA (4.1%) and the LPRCA (3.59%) are considered minor and generally in keeping with annual increases in previous years. However, the NPCA does forecast an increase of over 14%, which is a large deviation from previous years (increase between 2024 and 2023 of 1.14%). This increase is largely due to a number of unfunded budget priorities identified for 2025 including investments into infrastructure upgrades, staffing resources (including asset management plans; sustainable technologies and digitization), and flood and erosion mitigation. The NPCA has been working diligently to ensure that their systems and processes are updated, and the increase is reflective of that goal. It is noted that this level of increase is applied to all watershed municipalities and not expected to be maintained in future years.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

As noted in the table above, the amounts payable by Haldimand County for 2025 are as follows:

- GRCA: \$200,742
- LPRCA: \$347,476
- NPCA: \$184,934

The total payable for all three conservation authorities is \$733,152.

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 2025 Budget.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Not applicable.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2025 Draft GRCA Budget.
2. 2025 Draft LPRCA Budget.
3. 2025 Approved NPCA Budget.