

Written Deputation

Conservation Authority–Owned Housing and the Proposed Amalgamation

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Geoff Simpson

Date: February 9, 2026

Why I'm submitting this

I'm submitting this written deputation in support of **Councillor Schaefer's motion** on the Province's proposal to consolidate conservation authorities.

The motion focuses on avoiding service gaps, protecting local knowledge, ensuring fair governance and funding, and managing transition risks properly. This deputation looks at one practical issue that touches all of those concerns: **homes owned and rented by conservation authorities.**

A bit of background

Some conservation authorities, including the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, own rental homes. These are usually on floodplain or environmentally sensitive lands where private ownership isn't appropriate, but having someone living there helps with:

- site oversight and stewardship
- public safety and risk management
- generating modest income to support CA operations

These homes aren't an accident — they're part of how conservation authorities manage land responsibly.

If conservation authorities are consolidated, these housing assets would move to the new regional authority along with everything else.

What history tells us about amalgamations

Ontario has been through large public-sector amalgamations before, especially with municipalities in the late 1990s. A few lessons are worth keeping in mind.

First, housing assets were usually stable at the start. Leases stayed in place, tenants were protected, and there wasn't immediate disruption.

The more noticeable effects usually showed up later, after the initial transition. As decision-making became more centralized, choices about smaller, locally specific properties were increasingly made at a broader, system-wide level. While many properties continued to be held, the shift meant there was less room for local judgment and context in how those assets were managed.

Another change was transparency. Rental income and costs were rolled into larger budgets, making it harder for communities to see how local assets supported local services.

Why this matters for King Township

In King Township, conservation-authority-owned housing is tied closely to:

- flood risk and public safety
- lands on the Oak Ridges Moraine
- areas draining to Lake Simcoe

Managing these properties well depends on **local knowledge** — knowing the land, the water, the risks, and the history of each site. That’s exactly the kind of local expertise Councillor Schaefer’s motion is trying to protect.

How this connects to the motion

This issue lines up closely with the motion’s key points:

- **Service continuity:** Housing management, like permitting and flood response, can suffer during poorly planned transitions.
- **Local presence:** Decisions about these homes work best when local staff and local context are involved.
- **Transparency:** Rental income and property costs shouldn’t disappear into large regional budgets.
- **Good transition planning:** Asset decisions shouldn’t be made until governance, data, and service models are clearly in place.

Housing is just one example, but it shows how easy it is for local details to get lost in a large restructuring.

Questions worth asking the Province

Before any consolidation moves ahead, Council may want clear answers on:

- whether all CA-owned housing will be identified and reviewed before transition;
- how municipalities will be involved if a property is proposed for sale or repurposing;
- how tenant services and property management will be maintained during transition;
and
- how rental revenues and costs will be reported so local impacts remain visible.

These are practical questions that support the motion's call for safeguards, not obstacles to change.

In closing

This deputation isn't about opposing reform. It's about making sure that change doesn't quietly weaken local stewardship, accountability, or service quality over time.

Ontario's own amalgamation experience shows that once local control over assets is lost, it's very hard to get back. Raising these issues now is simply good planning, and it fits squarely within the intent of Councillor Schaefer's motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Geoff Simpson