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Export date: Fri Oct 30 6:59:20 2026 / +0000 GMT

Council supports NVCA?s resolution opposing amalgamation with LSRCA

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Shelburne Council has taken a position on a proposal to amalgamate the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA).

During their meeting on Monday, March 24, Shelburne Council passed a motion supporting the NVCA's resolution to oppose the proposed amalgamation made by Oro-Medonte.

?The biggest thought that I personally have [is] we're already a small fish in a big pond as far as our conservation authority goes. We're essentially at the end of our watershed,? said Coun. Kyle Fegan, Shelburne's appointed member to the NVCA's Board of Directors. ?My concern being that if we amalgamate the NVCA with a larger conservation authority such as Simcoe region; us being a small fish might as well be a minnow fish. We'd have no say whatsoever in the direction.?

The NVCA is a not-for-profit organization focused on preserving the environment, protecting the watershed community from natural hazards, and managing water resources within the Nottawasaga Valley watershed.

The Nottawasaga Valley watershed is approximately 3,700 square kilometres and has jurisdiction in 18 municipalities in the counties of Simcoe, Dufferin and Grey.

Dufferin County municipalities situated in the Nottawasaga Watershed include Amaranth, Melancthon, Mono, Mulmur and Shelburne.

In a letter shared with the Town of Shelburne, the NVCA noted the reasons behind their decision to oppose the amalgamation with LSRCA.

?It is the position of the NVCA Board that a formal amalgamation is neither necessary nor advisable,? reads the letter signed by NVCA chair, Jonathan Scott.

The letter highlights two main issues raised by the NVCA with the proposed amalgamation.

The first issue raised by the NVCA is that no independent or expert analysis has been presented to demonstrate the amalgamation of the two conservation authorities would improve efficiency or service delivery.

?On the contrary, experience has shown that larger municipal entities often result in increased costs, governance challenges, operational inefficiencies and a loss of local focus,? wrote the NVCA.

The second issue the NVCA found with the proposed joining is the different needs required by the watersheds.

?NVCA and LSRCA serve distinct watersheds with unique ecological, planning and regulatory frameworks. While some municipalities are within both authorities, the vast majority of NVCA member municipalities have little in common with the Lake Simcoe watershed.?

Coun. Walter Benotto, who has sat on the NVCA Board of Directors in the past, shared his agreement with opposing the amalgamation.

?Our water has nothing to do with Lake Simcoe at all and as a watershed we would not have the same focus from their board, from their membership and moneywise as we currently enjoy as the Nottawasaga,? said Benotto.

Shelburne Town Council unanimously passed a motion to support the resolution from NVCA.