

Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority Makes Cuts After Province Slashes Funding

By **Megan Pounder** - September 10, 2019



Coun. Bruni updated City Council on the status of the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority during Monday evening's meeting after a 48 per cent province-wide cut made by the Provincial Government, which affected the flood/erosion operations and natural hazard information sectors.

Bruni recognized the Councillors on the Authority – Niro, Hilsinger, and Gardi from the Sault, and Coun. Palumbo from Prince Township, before explaining that they had to make some "serious and hard decisions": eliminating one full-time position, reducing one full-time position to part-time and one to seasonal, as well as slashing the seasonal employee positions for the summer. This reduces staff at the SSMRCA from 8 – 6.5.

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Reductions also caused the cancellation of the Children's Environmental Education Program.

"The program was run through self-generated revenue as well as private donations, but this money is now being relocated towards the flood erosion operations and natural hazard programs," Bruni explained.

"I believe we have made all of the financial responsibility reductions that we were able to, and we are working solely on core mandated programs, which includes flood erosion, controlled maintenance, hazard management and drinking water source protection."

Coun. Shoemaker showed his support for the Conservation authority, thanking them for not automatically burdening the municipality with the costs reduced by the government.

"I think this is a very responsible way of the Conservation Authority to deal with their service cuts. They haven't downloaded the costs of the provincial cuts to the municipality, and certainly I appreciate that and I'm sure the tax payers of Sault Ste. Marie appreciate that as well," he said.

"It has resulted in some pain for the organization, very clearly as the letter sets out, and I can appreciate that those were probably tough decisions to make at the board table, but I do appreciate a reduction in funding from the provincial government has not automatically meant an increase in funding from the municipality."

The SSMRCA is asking for the same budget as 2019 for 2020, and authority's board has approved the 2020 levy of \$503,982.74 for the City of Sault Ste. Marie and \$5,605.54 for Prince Township.

Megan Pounder

Megan Pounder is an enthusiastic individual who's always striving to learn and grow. She's been a part of the SaultOnline team since May 2018. She has an Advanced Diploma in Journalism: Online, Broadcast and Print from Loyalist College. Along with her diploma, she has some freelance video journalism and social media experience. Growing up in Prince Edward County sparked her enthusiasm for all things nature. When she isn't reporting, you can find her reading, jamming out to music, or looking for new adventures.