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Date: March 6, 2024

## **Resolution 2024-04: Conservation Officer Reclassification**

### Background:

Ontario's Conservation Officers protect our beloved natural resources and wildlife. They uphold public safety by enforcing hunting and firearm laws and they investigate gruesome injuries and even deaths that result from hunting-related accidents. It's a highly skilled and dangerous law enforcement job. This work can be emotional and traumatizing. This work is often solitary, with Officers working alone in remote areas during inclement weather. But Conservation Officers aren't recognized, or compensated properly, for the work they do and risks they face. Morale is low, turnover is high and short staffing is putting public safety at risk.

Conservation Officers are a valuable part of our community. They protect our natural resources. They perform outreach and educate the public and they ensure public safety by conducting hunting safety, snowmobile, ATV, and vessel enforcement. They prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species in Ontario. Public safety legislation includes rules related to helmets, lifejackets, and other safety and navigational equipment, liquor consumption while operating a vehicle, and dam construction or alteration. This includes enforcing hunting rules related to hunting safety, forest fires, and oil, gas, and aggregates extraction.

Conservation Officers mission is to safeguard the public interest by leading and delivering outreach and natural resources compliance services. They enforce over 25 acts and regulations and work from 48 locations across the province to lead year-round field compliance checks to protect and regulate natural resources and keep the public safe. Conservation Officers have been engaged in our community in various activities aimed at helping our citizens such as running food drives to help local food banks. They also attend outdoor shows and fishing derbies, local fish, and game clubs, trapping councils and naturalists, school classrooms, youth clubs and family focused outdoor events. In conclusion, they provide investigative and enforcement services related to the safe and sustainable use of natural resources for people to enjoy for generations to come.

### Recommendation:

WHEREAS Ontario has 196 field Conservation Officers including 6 canine handlers who provide protection to Municipalities Natural Resources and uphold public safety by enforcing hunting and firearm laws and investigate gruesome injuries and even deaths that result from hunting-related accidents; in addition, Conservation Officers are often First Responders and ensure public safety by facilitating evacuations and enforcing Emergency Area orders during forest fires during record breaking wildfires such as we witnessed this past summer; and

WHEREAS Conservation Officers perform comparable work to Police Officers and other Enforcement Officers within the province and are professional, armed Peace Officers trained to police standards and undergo the same training; and

WHEREAS Ontario Municipalities are required that their constituents are informed, and their interests are safeguarded and ensure they have access to outreach and natural resources compliance services.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT NOMA support the Ontario Conservation Officer's Association in their efforts to have Conservation Officers in the Province of Ontario reclassified as Enforcement Officers and be compensated fairly.

Moved By: Fred Mota, Mayor of Red Lake

Seconded By: Wendy Brunetta, Councillor of Fort Frances

CARRIED



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President