



Nottawasaga Valley
Conservation Authority

July 4, 2025

BY EMAIL

Hon. Todd McCarthy MPP
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

RE: Need for a Provincial Response to Rising Chloride Pollution in Ontario Watersheds

Dear Minister McCarthy,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) to express our concern regarding the rising chloride levels in our watershed and to present you the enclosed resolution passed by the NVCA Board of Directors.

Chloride pollution in our region is increasing at an alarming rate. Recent data indicates that concentrations have tripled—up over 300%—in several watercourses since the 1970s. Without a change in winter road maintenance approaches to reduce road salt use, these elevated levels will exceed federal water quality guidelines and pose serious risks to aquatic ecosystems, drinking water sources, agricultural water sources, and long-term watershed health.

Municipalities across our jurisdiction are taking action to reduce their own salt use through investments in technology, alternative mixtures and products, and improved winter maintenance protocols. However, as NVCA staff and others have reported, the continued increase in chloride concentrations is being driven largely by private salt use and this fact, in turn, arises from legal liability pressures placed on winter maintenance contractors and property owners. As more of the sector adopts salt-heavy practices out of fear of litigation, the challenge intensifies, despite the availability of safer, more sustainable alternatives.

Our Board supports calls for a provincial approach that offers clarity and protection for those following best practices. To that end, I respectfully request your Ministry consider:

- Introducing a liability-limiting framework for certified snow and ice contractors who adhere to provincially recognised salt management best practices; and
- Convening a provincial advisory committee that includes municipal, environmental, industry and insurance stakeholders to guide long-term strategies for chloride reduction and freshwater protection.

We know from examples in other jurisdictions, such as New Hampshire, that this kind of approach to offer a limited liability framework for owners and contractors following best practices and acting in good faith can meaningfully reduce salt use without compromising public safety, by as much as 40% in some areas.

NVCA is committed to supporting your Ministry in developing and promoting practical, evidence-based policies to protect our watersheds. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in any working groups or consultation processes related to this important issue.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan Scott LLB MBA

Chair, Board of Directors

Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

cc

Honourable Sylvia Jones

Honourable Andrea Khanjin

Honourable Jill Dunlop

Honourable Doug Downey

Honourable Caroline Mulroney

MPP Brian Saunderson

Conservation Ontario

Ontario Salt Pollution Coalition

Township of Adjala-Tosorontio

Township of Amaranth

City of Barrie

Town of the Blue Mountains

Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury

Township of Clearview

Town of Collingwood

Township of Essa

Municipality of the Grey Highlands

Town of Innisfil

Township of Melancthon

Town of Mono

Township of Mulmur

Township of Oro-Medonte

Town of Shelburne

Township of Springwater

Town of New Tecumseth

Town of Wasaga Beach