

## Regulatory Framework for Water Dams in Ontario (February 2018)

In Ontario there are over 3,300 dams, making it the second largest provincial dam infrastructure portfolio in Canada. These dams are owned by all levels of government, industry, conservation agencies and private owners.

### Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act:

The *Lakes & Rivers Improvement Act* (LRIA) provides the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry (MNR) with authority to regulate the location, design, construction, decommissioning, operation and maintenance of dams. For the purposes of the LRIA, a dam is defined as a structure or work forwarding, holding back or diverting water and includes a dam, tailings dam, dike, diversion, channel alteration, artificial channel, culvert or causeway.

Dam owners are required to obtain LRIA approvals for the construction of new dams, certain repairs and alterations to existing dams and certain water crossings and channelization works. For new dams, proponents must submit applications for approval of the location and plans and specifications of the structure. For work on existing dams, proponents must obtain plans and specifications approval for alterations, improvements or repairs to the structure. The prescribed circumstances for which approval must be obtained by a dam owner within the Province can be found in [Ontario Regulation 454/96](#).

Dam owners are responsible for the safe operation and maintenance of their structures and for ensuring they remain in compliance with the LRIA and any approvals issued there under.

The LRIA provides the Minister with the ability to place orders on dam owners in several situations including but not limited to: the unapproved construction of a dam on a lake or river; where any activity that requires approval under the Act is started without approval; or to regulate the use and operation of any dam. Minister-appointed inspectors and engineers may enter and inspect, at any reasonable time, any place, structure or land, other than a private dwelling.

To support the administration of the LRIA, the ministry has produced a series of policies, technical bulletins (9) and best management practices (2). These documents contain a combination of mandatory requirements as well as technical guidance and best practices to inform applications for LRIA approvals. Dam owners may also wish to consider adopting industry recognized best practices to contribute to safe dam management.

Further information regarding dam management in Ontario can be found [here](#).

<b>Legislation</b>	<i>Lakes &amp; Rivers Improvement Act</i>
<b>Regulation</b>	Ontario Regulation 454/96 – Construction
<b>Policy &amp; Technical Guidance</b>	LRIA Administrative Guide, 9 Technical Bulletins
<b>Recommended Practices</b>	2 Best Management Practices