

November 30, 2020

Re: Schedule 6 from Bill 229

Dear Members of the Standing Committee,

I am writing as a researcher and teacher at the University of Waterloo in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. I have worked in an engineering consulting company on many development projects around the GTA, and now I am the instructor for courses related to water resource engineering. In these courses I continually stress the importance of a watershed perspective on development and water resource decision making. I also do research on the downstream impacts of land development on river systems and have worked closely with conservation authorities as they struggle to balance the needs of Ontario residents and the environment. Some of our field sites are actually in the Duffins Creek watershed that has been discussed in the media due to the recent wetlands development application. Through our collaborations with the municipal governments, consulting firms, public interest groups, and the conservation authorities, we are trying better understand the impacts of urbanization on stream health and stability and to use that information to inform decision on stormwater management and land-use change. I strongly oppose the proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act set out in Schedule 6 of Bill 229 that curtail the role of Conservation Authorities in watershed planning and management. I request that you remove Schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229.

As I teach students in my courses, civilization has always been organized based on watersheds. Though we rarely think about it, we depend on the organization of watersheds to deliver water and remove waste. I can't stress enough how important it is for long term economic and environmental sustainability that we not ignore this natural organization as we build our cities. Ontario's Conservation Authorities are a unique and widely respected innovation that explicitly acknowledges this organizing principle. Because they are not beholden to political boundaries, they provide the essential bridge across municipal boundaries to understand and address environmental concerns, such as the cumulative impacts of development on flooding, but also on air quality, recreational opportunities that are important for people's mental health, and concerns about biodiversity. Their vital role in land use planning and permitting must be retained to ensure that development does not put communities at risk from flooding and other climate change impacts through loss of wetlands, woodlands and farmland.

The changes proposed in Schedule 6 will reduce or constrain the mandate of Conservation Authorities, and are therefore contradictory to the interests of the people of Ontario who are facing enormous risks and costs as a result of climate change and ongoing biodiversity loss. The roles and responsibilities of Conservation Authorities are critical in protecting the lands, waters and wildlife which benefit businesses and communities across Ontario, and upon which our health and well-being ultimately depend.

I urge you to remove Schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229.

Yours sincerely,



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