

November 29, 2020

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 1405, Whitney Block
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Attn: Amarjot Sandhu, MPP, Chair: amarjot.sandhu@pc.ola.org
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CC: Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance: rod.phillipsco@pc.ola.org
Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario: doug.fordco@pc.ola.org
MPP Wayne Gates: w gates-co@ndp.on.ca

Re: Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020

Bill 229 proposes to protect, support and recover from COVID-19; But Schedule 6 and Schedule 8 effectively kills the ability of Conservation Authorities to protect our ecosystems and allows the destruction of wetlands and mature forests for private development without any oversight or scientific examination.

I fail to understand how Schedule 6 and Schedule 8 of Bill 229 has any positive effect for protecting the public from the COVID pandemic. Premier Doug Ford claims to be following science to counter a pandemic at the same time ignoring science to promote an “Open for Business” motto for developers. Why is the Ontario government ignoring environmental science, the advice of conservation authorities and the clear threat of global warming? Secondly, why is such an important issue of environment buried in a COVID budget with only 3 days of public review, instead of being openly presented to Ontario conservation authorities and residents with ample time for discussion?

If the Ford government truly wants to protect and recover from COVID, then examine the science of sustainable development. Developers do not create wildlife habitat and mature forests. Forests and wetlands are a process of nature that develop over millenia; once a forest or marsh is gone they can not be ‘rebuilt’ or replaced like a building or a parking lot.

If the Ford government truly wants to protect and recover from COVID (and future pandemics) then they need to look no further than the many United Nations' studies on ecosystems and other similar scientific studies. Sustainable practices are possible which also deter the potential of pandemics and the spread of disease without the loss of habitat.

United Nations' report highlights links between ‘unprecedented biodiversity loss’ and spread of disease:

“Earth’s living systems as a whole are being compromised and the more humanity exploits nature in unsustainable ways and undermines its contributions to people, the more we undermine our own well-being, security and prosperity.”

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072292>

“As nature degrades,” said Elizabeth Mrema, UN Executive Director of the Convention on Biological Diversity, **“new opportunities emerge for the spread to humans and animals of devastating diseases like this year’s coronavirus.** The window of time available is short, but the pandemic has also demonstrated that transformative changes are possible when they must be made.”

UN Report: **“The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.”**

“The diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems, as well as many fundamental contributions we derive from nature, are declining fast, although we still have the means to ensure a sustainable future for people and the planet.”

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

On January 23rd, 2020, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, **the Doomsday Clock was set to 100 seconds before midnight because of climate change, the destruction to the environment** and the threat of nuclear war.

<https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/>

North America Has Lost More Than 1 in 4 Birds in Last 50 Years - over 3 billion birds:
<https://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50-years-new-study-says>

U.S. president Donald Trump and his Republican party are ignoring science, the threat of global warming and undermining the environmental controls we need to survive COVID-19 and future pandemics. They seem bent on exploiting nature to its fullest without regard to the consequences. It's disheartening to see the Ontario government following the same destructive path.

Do the right thing, remove Schedule 6 and Schedule 8 in their entirety from Bill 229 to help protect our province.

Sincerely,

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