

November 26, 2020

Subject: Effect of Schedule 6 of Bill 229 on Conservation Authorities

To: the Honourable Rod Phillips, the Honourable Jeff Yurek, the Honourable Steve Clark, and the Honourable John Yakabuski

Dear Ministers Phillip, Yurek, Clark, and Yakabuski

We join Nature Ontario and many municipalities in requesting that Schedule 6 of Bill 229 be withdrawn from the Budget Bill.

More than just a budget, Bill 229 proposes legislative changes that will weaken the ability of conservation authorities to protect people, property and the environment.

We live in a municipality which benefits greatly from its engagement with the Rideau Valley and Mississippi Conservation Authorities. As former board members of the Pike Lake Community Association, we can attest to the important work undertaken by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority. Their work is a key factor in keeping Pike Lake healthy and therefore, the value of the properties on our lake. Healthy lakes maintain the real estate value of lake front properties and thereby the tax base of many rural municipalities – for many rural municipalities, taxes from lake front property owners is a significant portion of their taxes.

Such changes do not belong in a budget bill, which is exempt from consultation on the Environmental Registry of Ontario. That's why many municipalities are calling for Schedule 6 to be withdrawn from the budget bill and for the province to engage in meaningful consultation on the proposed changes.

Conservation authorities have identified several major concerns with the proposed changes, which will directly affect municipalities, residents and watersheds. These include changes to Board governance, including who a municipality can appoint to represent them; new powers enabling the Minister to override a conservation authority and issue a development permit in a watershed without a hearing and with no appeal; the removal of enforcement tools and a conservation authority's ability to appeal planning decisions; potential provincial interference in local budgets and fees; and limitations on programs, with a decreased focus on environmental monitoring, stewardship and outdoor education.

These are significant changes. They will bring increased administrative costs and burden for municipalities and conservation authorities, an erosion of local decision-making, patchwork program delivery across watersheds, decreased resources for capital renewal, and an undermining of the integrity, transparency and effectiveness of the planning and permitting processes.

In closing, we call on the Ontario in its role as a **guardian of the public interest and defender of democratic processes** to withdraw Schedule 6 from the budget bill and to engage in meaningful consultation on the proposed changes to Ontario's Conservation Authorities.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Rogers & Cathy Cameron

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cc:

Randy Hillier, MPP, Lanark, Frontenac and Kingston

Amarjot Sandhu, MPP, Chair, Ontario's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Julia Douglas, Clerk, Ontario's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs