

Bill Walker, MPP, Bruce - Grey- Owen Sound

Dear Bill Walker,

When you and I last spoke on the phone on September 28, 2020 you reassured me that you had confidence in the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Minister of Municipal Affairs that they would not support the demise of Conservation Authorities (CAs) in Ontario. Now, two months later, I understand Schedule 6 has been included in the recent Budget Bill 229, which does not require public consultation, even though it is not a budget item. Your government is poised to vote on this bill. Will you stand up and get others to help defeat it?

On October 2, 2019 you and Premier Ford received a resolution from the Municipality of Grey Highlands explaining the importance of CAs to our land use planning and protection from contaminated water, flooding, erosion ... and most of all the exorbitant remediation cost to taxpayers locally, provincially and federally. The Walkerton instance comes to mind and I have no idea how many millions of dollars that cost. Many other southern Ontario municipalities shared Grey Highlands' resolution that it "supports continuation of the programs and services of the three CAs, both mandatory and non-mandatory, and that no programs or services of GSCA, NVCA and SVCA or of other CAs in Ontario be "wound down" at this time".

The CAs were an innovative response in 1946 to the erosion, flooding, drought, and other hazards experienced in Ontario. Based on watersheds that crossed municipal boundaries they "made common sense". Anyone who experienced Hurricane Hazel, in 1954, especially the impact of the Humber River on Etobicoke, where our current Premier grew up, should understand the practicality of CAs.

In this 75th anniversary of a program supported by all Ontario governments since 1946, and envied by jurisdictions around the world, it is, pick a word - outrageous, idiotic, Trumpian, ignorant, unnecessary. It can only benefit developers who buy land "cheap", because it is not suited to "development" and then pass the cost of the resulting devastation onto taxpayers. A recent Ministerial Zoning Order on Duffin Creek wetlands and Lake Ontario, comes to mind.

Bill, I had a lot of confidence that you would ensure CAs would continue to serve all Ontarians. I do not know what happened. I will gladly address your colleagues, if there is anything they do not understand. Right now, the easiest action is to delete Schedule 6 from The Budget Bill 229.

FYI - I have lived 45 years at the headwaters of five major rivers in Ontario - Nottawasaga, Saugeen, Sauble, Grand and Beaver - and witnessed the impacts of "nature" on the watersheds and downstream consequences. Without the science-based advice of CAs, Ontario would have experienced many more tragedies. Please help Ontarians avert this potential tragedy, the demise of CAs.

Sincerely,

Peggy Hutchison

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