

Submission by:
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Nov. 30, 2020

Dear Sandy Shaw MPP,

Dear Minister Phillips,

(cc: Minister Clark and Minister Yurek)

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 am also deeply concerned that these proposed changes were brought forward in a budget bill, thereby over-riding my right to comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights. I request that you remove Schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229.

Ontario's Conservation Authorities are a unique and widely respected innovation. They provide a much-valued bridge across municipal boundaries to understand and address environmental concerns, such as flooding, species protection, habitat gardening, erosion protection, public education, etc. Because they operate at the watershed level, they are ideally positioned to encourage science-based collaborative strategies and decision-making. 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 critical farmland.

The changes proposed in Schedule 6 will reduce or constrain the mandate of Conservation Authorities, and are therefore contradictory to my interests as a resident of Ontario, a province that is 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.

As just one example, our lives depend on clean water and Hamilton already has serious water quality issues that have not been resolved -- "poop gate" is not something we are proud of. In fact, without clean water, soil and air all Ontarians will suffer negative health effects of course -- these are the basic essentials of life that the Premier is attacking and I take that very personally.

I urge you to remove Schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229 as it doesn't even belong in a Covid-19 emergent bill. It makes me furious that this kind of public deceit is legal! Passing Bill 229 as it is will only serve to worsen the climate crisis. The state of the natural resources we depend on for life is at stake. This and tackling climate change are the first concern in my life today.

If this legislation passes into law it will definitely create an even more depressing year for an already suffering public. Please stop this bill as more than just schedule 6 should be removed from it. We deserve to be heard in a proper public consultation instead of this rushed madness. Please listen to the advice of the Canadian Environmental Law Association who have sent their own submission already. Their submission is described here:

“CELA has prepared a written submission in response to Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020. The thrust of CELA’s recommendations is the removal of Schedule 6 (proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and consequential amendments) and Schedule 8 (proposed changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994) be withdrawn in their entirety from Bill 229.” (CELA website, Nov. 2020).

Yours sincerely,
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