

Dear Government,

Please do not make changes to the Conservation Authorities Act. I am sending this email to ask that the changes to Schedule 6, Bill 299 be removed. These changes would be detrimental to Ontario's unique conservation areas that are essential for watershed management.

Changes outlined in the Bill will take away the opportunity for citizens to vocalize opposing opinions. We pride ourselves in a democratic government, however these changes contradict that and are going to take away the voices of people who fight for the environment.

Changes outlined in the Bill will have long-term consequences on our environment which we can't afford. We are already seeing increases in extreme weather frequency and severity. For example, in 2018, the GTA had extreme flooding, which resulted in a loss of about 80 million dollars to insured damages. These unfortunate and costly events will increase if we develop natural environments that provide ecosystem services.

The proposed development in Pickering is an example of detrimental infrastructure development that will be allowed to proceed without proper environmental assessments or input from conservation authorities. Wetlands are essential for providing clean water and managing groundwater reserves. They are also important for minimizing harmful algal bloom development, which is an increasing phenomenon that is putting the health of our water resources at risk. It is essential that conservation authorities have a voice in which development should be negated and which should be allowed to proceed, since they are most informed of Ontario's watersheds and their importance.

It may seem that fast-tracking development is a quick solution to the loss in economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but long-term this is not a solution. An increase in impervious surfaces will only increase damages to infrastructure as a result of flooding. There are other solutions that can be put into place to create jobs and improve the economy that don't involve the development in Ontario's watersheds. For example, Ontario has many unused industrial areas that could be re-developed instead.

Please don't harm our environmental resources.

Thank you for taking the time to read,

Isabel Hilgendag

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