

Submission on Bill 229

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CANADA

Summary: Schedule 6 must be removed from Bill 229. Ontario's Conservation authorities are vital for protecting the health and safety of the environment and people. The responsibilities assigned to conservation authorities in watershed planning and management are important positive contributions, and these roles must not be curtailed. Schedule 6 must be withdrawn so that these changes can be given proper discussion, to ensure that the province and residents can truly benefit.

Schedule 6 in omnibus Budget Bill 229 would severely limit the power of conservation authorities. This would fly in the face of the stated overall purpose of the Conservation Authorities Act, which is to "provide for the organisation and delivery of programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in watersheds in Ontario."

Especially as the world grapples with the urgent action needed to fight climate change, the province must use every tool at its disposal to maintain and adapt to climate change. This is certainly not the time to be severely curtailing the powers of Ontario's conservation authorities, which are currently the envy of many other jurisdictions.

Conservation authorities hold vital knowledge that is vital not only to the protection of ecosystems, but also to the economy, and the community at large. Undermining the ability of conservation authorities to protect natural infrastructure could have myriad unintended consequences and undue risks to people and the environment.

Schedule 6 must be removed until it is given the proper attention and discussion that it requires. The current language would be far too restrictive and pose an undue risk to environmental and social health. Development or land use changes require oversight and must not be allowed to proceed in circumstances which would be seriously detrimental to the future health of the environment and people, nor financially detrimental due to unforeseen environmental circumstances. Conservation

authorities must be allowed proper weight and oversight, so that these circumstances can be properly addressed.