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December 2, 2020

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
c/o Julia Douglas, Committee Clerk
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A2

Re: Bill 229, Schedule 6 – Proposed Changes to Conservation Authorities

Dear Chair Sandu and Committee Members,

As you are aware, Bill 229 – Schedule 6 proposes significant changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and the *Planning Act*. Having reviewed the proposed amendments, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority is deeply concerned that these changes will erode local decision-making, hinder our ability to protect people and the environment and lead to less efficiency.

At a time when climate change is making Ontarians more vulnerable to floods and droughts, when desired economic recovery will depend on green infrastructure, clean water and greenspace, and when citizens are turning to conservation areas in record numbers to help cope with a global pandemic, legislative changes that weaken conservation authorities need careful review and consideration. For this to happen in a meaningful way, we respectfully ask that Schedule 6 be withdrawn from Bill 229.

Municipalities across the Rideau watershed agree. County of Frontenac, County of Lanark, United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and City of Ottawa have all submitted resolutions or letters from Council requesting the removal of Schedule 6, and now many lower tier municipalities are adding their support. An ever-growing number of residents, lake associations, community groups, water resource experts and others are also calling for Schedule 6 to be withdrawn. The collective desire is for fulsome consultation to occur.

Last spring, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority was honoured to host Minister Phillips, then the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Minister Phillips, accompanied by Minister Fullerton, got to see firsthand how RVCA's programs and services support the Made-In-Ontario Environment Plan. We were also fortunate to meet with Minister Yurek's office last fall and were grateful that local MPPs Goldie Ghamari and Jeremy Roberts joined us.

**Proudly working in partnership
with our 18 watershed municipalities**

Athens, Augusta, Beckwith, Central Frontenac, Clarence-Rockland,
Drummond/North Elmsley, Elizabethtown-Kitley, Merrickville-Wolford, Montague,
North Dundas, North Grenville, Ottawa, Perth, Rideau Lakes, Smiths Falls, South Frontenac, Tay Valley, Westport

In both instances, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority highlighted how effectively our 18 member municipalities work together through the conservation authority to manage and protect their shared land and water – understood to be critical for local tourism, recreation and economic development, as well as protecting residents and businesses from flooding, erosion and drought.

When reviewing the *Conservation Authorities Act*, it is important to remember where we came from and why conservation authorities matter to their local municipalities and communities:

- **Conservation authorities were created following decades of poor land use management** that resulted in flooding, drought, erosion, deforestation and poor water quality. It was recognized that the only way to address these issues effectively was at a watershed scale as water flows across municipal boundaries impacting everyone downstream.
- **Conservation authorities are created by municipalities.** A conservation authority is only formed when municipalities within a watershed choose to do so. Once created, municipalities are responsible for appointing a Board of Directors and working together to oversee and fund programs that take care of their shared natural resources.
- **Conservation authorities take a wholistic approach to managing the watershed.** Planting six million trees, managing 7,400 acres of land, teaching 200,000 children about nature, providing 42 kilometers of trails, ensuring people build their homes and businesses in safe places, and constantly checking the pulse of the environment through monitoring and restoration has made the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority a trusted and accountable partner to the Province and our local municipalities.
- **Conservation authorities have specialized expertise and local knowledge** that municipalities, provincial ministries and other partners rely on for decision making.
- **Conservation authorities are one of the last agencies with staff on-the-ground.** Staff are accessible, in the field and working directly with residents, farmers, businesses, developers, community groups and other partners to make real improvements on the landscape.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and we hope that you will hear the many municipal and public voices asking for Schedule 6 to be removed from Bill 229. Withdrawing Schedule 6 will allow proposed changes to conservation authorities to be properly considered and discussed by all those who will be affected which is critical at a time when conservation matters more than ever.

Sincerely,



Pieter Leenhouts P. Eng.
Chair
Rideau Valley Conservation Authority



Sommer Casgrain-Robertson
General Manager
Rideau Valley Conservation Authority