

December 2, 2020

Sent by email

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Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
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Attn: Amarjot Sandhu, MPP, Chair: amarjot.sandhu@pc.ola.org
Julia Douglas, Clerk: comm-financeaffairs@ola.org

CC: Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance: rod.phillipsco@pc.ola.org
Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario: doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

Re: **Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from Covid-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020**

I am writing to urge the Ontario Government to remove Schedule 6, and Schedule 8 from Bill 229.

I fully support the environmental concerns and all the recommendations of the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), through its written submission to the Standing Committee, on November 27, 2020 that:

Schedule 6 (proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and consequential amendments) and Schedule 8 (proposed changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994) both be withdrawn in their entirety from Bill 229.

The Conservation Authorities Act (CAAct) (1949), the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (1994), the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) (1993) were all passed by former Ontario governments, and parties working together, for enduring protection of our lands and waters sustainably, from continuing human acts of excess consumption and environmental degradation.

We need to follow the laws, regulations and rules of these Acts, more than ever because we know Nature (including humanity) is increasingly suffering from human over-consumption
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threats causing land and water degradation, pollution, biodiversity decline, climate change, and climate crisis inaction.

We need to keep and follow the rules of these Acts to ensure Ontario and our planet will be livable for our children now, and for future generations.

Remove Schedule 6, proposed changes to CAAct, Conservation Authorities

We need to retain and augment the science-based expertise, scope and mandate of our Ontario Conservation Authorities, to help us all transition urgently and rapidly towards environmental and ecosystem sustainability that our lives depend on to thrive and survive – all living creatures.

We depend on our Conservation Authorities for their services and programs that further conservation, restoration, and management of our watersheds. We need them to continuously monitor, measure and recommend improvements and reparations in order to have healthy, unpolluted watersheds, ecosystem sustainability on our lands, and in our streams, rivers, our ground and source waters, our drinking water sources.

In their submission CELA has included the statement from Ontario's Special Advisor on Flooding, Doug McNeil, that "Ontario has a long history of taking actions to keep people and property safe from the impacts of flooding through land use planning policies and mitigative activities."

Our Conservation Authorities have been our champions of flood mitigation, with their conservation model, land use model, watershed approach. We need their scientific expertise in flood and erosion mitigation to continue now, more than ever before to help us build climate resilient communities.

We cannot afford to limit the mandate or services of our Conservation Authorities. Our health, wellbeing, our lives depend on retaining the consultation, resources, and authority of their science-based conservation expertise.

CELA states, "Conservation Authorities were established to have a watershed approach and oversight precisely because municipal boundaries and interests do not align completely with ecologically relevant (e.g. watershed) boundaries.

We cannot disempower our Conservation Authorities from protecting our watersheds from municipal interests that do not align with ecologically relevant boundaries.

Municipal interests are obviously in rapid development progress with rampant residential and industrial development, encroaching on wetlands, natural, and protected lands. I am witnessing

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it directly in my rural municipality of Middlesex Centre. Rich agricultural farmlands, forests, and ponds are being bulldozed for urbanization, residential and proposed increasing industrial development. I am frightened and outraged. I wonder how this could possibly be happening. I wonder how this exponential threat to our food security, our protected and environmentally sensitive natural areas and wetlands, our protected ecosystems, our inextricably linked life systems can be stopped.

It looks to me like provincial environmental laws, and the recommendations and powers of Conservation Authorities of management and protection are already somehow being overruled, in favour of non-stop ecologically detrimental development.

We need to follow environmental laws and retain the mandate of the Conservation Authorities to protect our lands and waters from environmental degradation

I very strongly request and urge the Ontario Government to remove Schedule 6, in its entirety from Bill 229. We need the expertise our Conservation Authorities to be able to help us sustain nature as nature generously sustains us.

Remove Schedule 8, proposed changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994

I join CELA in opposing Schedule 8 and call for its withdrawal from Bill 229.

The world is in a biodiversity crisis – this is a threat to at least 1 million species already, including humanity.

CELA points out the vital importance of CFSA to protect our forests, two thirds of Ontario's land base, and home and habitat to numerous species, including species at risk and endangered species.

As CELA has indicated, "Schedule 8 unravels what few legal mechanisms remained that prioritize conservation and protect natural areas in response to the biodiversity crisis. As set out in the Auditor General's 2020 Annual Report, this is precisely the issue which ought to garner the government's urgent and utmost attention. Biodiversity loss has been ranked as a top-five risk – by likelihood and impact – to economies over the next decade."

It is imperative our Ontario government to retain the regulations of the CFSA, and have a long-term plan and targets to expand its network of protected areas.

I strongly request and urge the Ontario Government to remove Schedule 6 and Schedule 8, from Bill 229.

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Ontarians for Nature Advocacy

I am very thankful for all forms of environmental advocacy in Ontario. I hope our Ontario government will consider the valuable input from all citizens. I encourage the provincial government to engage in consultations with First Nations, Indigenous knowledge keepers and scientists and local communities.

I have been very encouraged to talk to my MPP, and to write to my government, by groups like CELA, Ontario Nature, and Environmental Defence.

As of today, over 17,976 citizens have written, via Ontario Nature, to Minister Phillips, Minister Clark, Minister Yakabuski, Minister Yurek, and their local MPPs, to strongly oppose the proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, Schedule 6 of Bill 229 and remove it in its entirety from Bill 229. The letter also presented our deep concerns that these proposed changes were brought forward in a budget bill, thereby over-riding our citizen rights to comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights. Many more citizens would have been provided the opportunity to comment with important and valuable input.

I hope my Ontario Government will afford full consideration to the important and essential information that will be provided by the number of environmental organizations who have been permitted to speak to the Standing Committee, by all those who have sent written submissions to the Standing Committee, and by all those who have written letters to the Ministers, and their local MPPs.

Recommendations by our Auditor General and Environmental Commissioner

I strongly expect our Ontario Government to follow the analysis and recommendations from our Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk and Environmental Commissioner, Jerry Demarco and their team of experts and auditors.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (ipbes.net) The Summary Report and Resources for Policy-Makers

I strongly hope and expect Canada's policy-makers, our federal government and our provincial governments, will respect and follow the recommendations, and use the resources of the **IPBES**, as the framework for environmental and ecosystem sustainability - decision-making, policy-making, planning, legislation and action.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (ipcc.ch) Reports for Policy-Makers

I strongly hope and expect Canada's policy-makers, our federal government and our provincial governments, will respect and follow the recommendations, and use the resources of the IPCC, as the framework for environmental and climate action - decision-making, policy-making, legislation, planning, legislation and action.

Conclusion

For all the very summarized reasons and references above, to promote and ensure environmental sustainability, it is critical to retain and augment the mandate of our Conservation Authorities, and to uphold the laws and regulations of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. It is essential and critical for survival, and I urge you to remove entirely Schedule 6, and Schedule 8 from Bill 229.

Sincerely,
Gloria Monteith