



ConservationONTARIO
Natural Champions

Media Release

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Province Tying Conservation Authorities Up in Red Tape – *Repeal Schedule 6*

NEWMARKET (November 18, 2020) – Conservation Ontario (CO) recommends the Province repeal (remove) Schedule 6 which amends the *Conservation Authorities Act* and the *Planning Act* because the changes being proposed will create more red tape and higher costs for Ontario taxpayers as well as threaten the independent watershed-based approach used by conservation authorities (CAs) in land use planning.

There are a number of proposed changes contained in [Bill 229: Protect, Support and Recover from COVID 19 Act \(Budget Measures Act\)](#) which Conservation Ontario believes will have the potential to add significant delays and costs in conservation authority enforcement, planning and permitting processes as well as ultimately have the potential for significant impacts on Ontario's ability to provide cost-effective flooding and natural hazards management/protection and drinking water protection to Ontarians.

The proposed amendments are not administrative but, in fact, could have significant environmental impact due to decisions being made without consideration of the local watershed science and data provided by conservation authorities.

“The changes the Province is proposing will achieve the opposite of what they say they want to do which is to reduce red tape and create conditions for growth,” said Kim Gavine, General Manager of Conservation Ontario. Conservation Ontario represents Ontario's 36 conservation authorities which are community-based watershed management agencies. Conservation Ontario was already on track with addressing these issues through [CO's Client Service and Streamlining Initiative](#) which rolled out last year.

Through a review of the current permit review process, Conservation Ontario estimates that the new changes to the permitting appeals process could delay approvals by as much as 200 days. As well costs can be expected to increase due to more staff time being required for permit appeals processes rather than time being spent on actually issuing permits.

Changes to regulatory enforcement tools will also increase costs. During the pandemic, conservation authorities have been experiencing an increase in illegal activities on CA-owned and/or regulated lands. Extensive remediation costs and damages to neighbouring properties can be avoided if tools such as enhanced powers of inspection and stop (work) orders are available to CA officers.

Conservation Ontario feels that if the changes around the planning appeals process proceed, we run the risk of the plan review process having a piecemeal approach which could ultimately create the potential for cumulative negative environmental impacts.

“What the Province is proposing to do through the changes in Schedule 6 significantly threatens the independent, [watershed-based approach of Ontario’s conservation authorities](#) that municipalities and others rely on to protect our natural resources and to steer development away from creating or exacerbating flooding and other natural hazards,” Gavine said. “This isn’t what you would expect a government to do in light of the growing and more complex climate change impacts we are experiencing.”

“Conservation authorities bring the local watershed science to the planning process. They apply this knowledge in permit and planning application reviews. With the new ability of the Minister to issue a permit, it’s not clear what science the Minister will rely upon to review an application and issue a permit. The proposed changes raise the risks of having the permitting process veer away from a science-based decision,” Gavine says.

“Conservation authorities rely on science-based watershed information to ensure that Ontario’s communities are protected from upstream to downstream,” Gavine points out.

Conservation Ontario is encouraging residents and watershed partners to reach out to the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as well as their local MPPs to request them to repeal Schedule 6 of the *Bill 229: Protect, Support and Recover from COVID 19 Act (Budget Measures Act)*.

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For more information:

Kim Gavine, General Manager, Conservation Ontario

kgavine@conservationontario.ca

905-251-3268

Jane Lewington, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Conservation Ontario

jlewington@conservationontario.ca

905-717-0301

For more information on the changes being proposed in Schedule 6, [click here](#).