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Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act

On November 5, 2020, the Province introduced changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, under the 2020 Provincial Budget Bill, Bill 229, that will limit the conservation authorities' ability to protect people, property, and the environment.

Key impacts of these changes and why you should be concerned:

1. The ability of the Province to determine which municipally and self-funded programs conservation authorities can undertake.

Why you should be concerned: This change undermines the ability of municipalities, local Boards, and Councils to define programs that they know will benefit the communities that they represent. This may have significant impacts on public safety, the local environment, and our ability to combat the increasing impacts of climate change. This change may also impact the types of programs and services that local communities support and benefit from like environmental education and stewardship activities, which assist landowners in taking action to improve the environment.

2. The reduction of the conservation authority's ability to protect people and the environment.

Why you should be concerned: These changes will impact not only the ability of Ontario's conservation authorities to protect and preserve the environment, but also to protect and preserve our communities. A large role of conservation authorities is protecting people and property from natural hazards such as flooding and erosion. These most recent changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and the *Planning Act* significantly undermine the ability of conservation authorities to successfully do this.

The two primary areas of concern are the removing of conservation authorities' ability to be party to an appeal of planning decisions and the ability of the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to issue a permit instead of a conservation authority. This has the potential for significant negative impacts on Ontarians as it lacks transparency and has the potential to add political motivation to decisions on appeals while removing the use of background information, local watershed knowledge and scientific expertise on which conservation authority staff currently make these decisions.

3. Amendments that will negatively impact the development permit process and the introduction of new fee appeal methods that will create more costs, delays, and red tape.

Why you should be concerned: The province has also introduced new fee appeal methods that may cause a significant administrative burden on staff and hearing boards, ultimately leading to delays in development reviews. New appeal mechanisms will significantly slow down permitting as staff focus will inherently shift to time consuming appeals rather than working with the public to undertake safe, sustainable development in a timely fashion.

4. Contradictory actions that put Ontario at a greater risk to the impacts of climate change.

Why you should be concerned: Ontario's ability to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change will be hampered by these changes that undermine the work of conservation authorities to keep

development out of high flood risk areas and for protecting natural infrastructure such as wetlands. These actions directly contradict the Made in Ontario Environment Plan that promotes building resilience for the costs and impacts of Climate Change.

5. Changes to Board Member interests

Why you should be concerned: The Province's proposed new legislation requires Board Members to act in the best interest of their municipality instead of in the best interest of the conservation authority. This contradicts the fiduciary duty of board members of any organization to represent the best interests of the corporation they are overseeing, and could result in conflicts of interest, which in the case of conservation authorities, could compromise our ability to protect local ecosystems and keep people safe from natural hazards like flooding and erosion.

How You Can Help!

If you value the work of conservation authorities to protect the environment and to protect our communities from the impacts of natural hazards, we urge you speak up now and push to have Schedule 6 removed from Bill 229.

[Please take a few minutes and send an email in one easy step, expressing your concern along with our friends at Ontario Nature to:](#)

- Your MPP Ross Romano (Sault Ste. Marie) ross.romano@pc.ola.org
- Minister Philips, Minister of Finance, minister.fin@ontario.ca,
- Minister Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister.mah@ontario.ca
- Minister Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, minister.mnrf@ontario.ca
- Minister Yurek, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, minister.mecp@ontario.ca

Connect with us on social media. Show your support on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) with the hashtag **#ConservationMatters**.

For more information contact:

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