

Media Release

For Immediate Release

Changes Fall Short of Addressing Conservation Authorities' Concerns

NEWMARKET December 5, 2020 - New changes made to the Schedule 6 amendments proposed for conservation authorities (CAs) fall well short of addressing their concerns and even introduce new additions which create more delays and costs, as well as allow the Minister to disregard CA science-based decision-making for development.

"We have to continue to ask the Province to withdraw Schedule 6 of Bill 229," says Kim Gavine, General Manager of Conservation Ontario, the association that represents the 36 conservation authorities. "These changes don't address our concerns and further erode our ability to protect people, property and our environment."

While it appears that a few amendments around board governance may address some of our concerns and those of our municipal partners, Gavine points out that, overall, the proposed changes don't go far enough, particularly around planning, permitting and enforcement.

As well, a new section has been added to Schedule 6 which requires the conservation authority to issue a permit when the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issues Ministers Zoning Orders (MZO) which can override conservation authority science-based decisions. In fact, the new section requires the conservation authority to issue the permit even if the application does not meet the criteria for issuing a permit and/or contravenes provincial policies and plans. Bottom line – the criteria for issuing permits is for protecting lives and property against flooding and other natural hazards.

The addition of the MZO section and all of the other changes, combined, will create even more delays and costs, not just for conservation authorities but also for municipalities and applicants, Gavine points out.

Many amendments still remain such as those that remove and/or significantly hinder the conservation authorities' role in regulating development. The Minister will still be allowed to make decisions on permit appeals and issue permits without watershed data and expertise from the conservation authorities.

As well, Conservation authorities find themselves in a position where they are basically the only landowners in Ontario who cannot appeal most planning decisions which affect their lands. Gavine points out that conservation authorities are the second largest landowners in Ontario

and this seems to conflict with one of the Province's proposed mandatory programs that CAs are to manage their own lands to protect sensitive ecosystems.

Conservation Ontario made a presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on November 30th. These are available on our website:

<https://conservationontario.ca/policy-priorities/conservation-authorities-act/standing-committee-submissions>

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For more information on the changes being proposed in Schedule 6:

<https://conservationontario.ca/policy-priorities/conservation-authorities-act>

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