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MEDIA RELEASE

Issued:

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QUINTE CONSERVATION CALLS FOR SUPPORT FROM CONCERNED WATERSHED RESIDENTS TO LOBBY PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES ACT AND THE PLANNING ACT

On November 5, 2020, the Provincial Government released the 2020 Ontario Budget (Bill 229), which proposes changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and the Planning Act. These amendments significantly affect the role Conservation Authorities (CAs) have in protecting Ontarians, and their property, from flooding and other natural hazards. Further, the changes risk removing or limiting the watershed science-based approach conservation authorities across Ontario have been using to ensure safe development on or around valuable water sources and sensitive lands.

Key outcomes and changes to consider include:

- Remove and/or significantly hinder the conservation authorities' role in regulating development, permit and planning application appeal process and engaging in review and appeal of municipal planning applications
- Allow the Minister to make decisions on permit appeals and issue permits without watershed data and expertise from the conservation authorities
- Redirect the fiduciary role (Duty of Members) for municipally appointed CA Board members. They are being told to make decisions in the best interest of the municipalities and not the conservation authority.

CAO Brad McNevin says, "For over 75 years, we have been working effectively with local municipalities, partner groups, and watershed residents to deliver programs and services that benefit our local communities. If passed, the changes to the Conservation Authorities Act will jeopardize the local decision making process, thus eliminating the necessary watershed-based approach needed to ensure the continued protection of our residents and environment."

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Quinte Conservation (QC) remains positive that the Province's intent to modernize the watershed-based scope through good governance and improvements to streamlining the delivery of core services and programs will be achieved. However, the proposed changes included in Schedule 6 of Bill 229 will significantly reduce CAs abilities to safeguard watershed residents' and their property from natural hazards while acting in the best interest of preserving and protecting Ontario's environment and resources.

CAO Brad McNevin adds, "Bill 229 is supposed to protect, support, and help us recover from COVID-19. Schedule 6 of the Bill, which proposes changes to Conservation Authorities, does nothing to help us accomplish this and should be repealed."

Individuals can learn more about the proposed changes at QuinteConservation.ca. QC is encouraging watershed residents, partner groups, and municipalities to reach out to the Premier, local MPPs, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and request they review and address the concerns presented by this Bill before enacting it.

Quinte Conservation is a community-based environmental protection agency. It serves 18 municipalities in the watersheds of the Moira, Napanee and Salmon Rivers and Prince Edward County. It provides cost-effective environmental expertise and leadership. Quinte Conservation's main goal is to create a sustainable ecosystem where people and nature live in harmony. More information about Quinte Conservation is available at www.quinteconservation.ca.

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