

December 6, 2020

Distributed via email

An Open Letter to Ontario's Members of Provincial Parliament

The decision is now in your hands. You can vote to remove Schedule 6 (proposed changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and other consequential amendments) from Bill 229 (the proposed Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020) at Third Reading. Demonstrate that you are listening and have heard the 10's of thousands who have expressed their concerns.

Building climate resilience is crucially important for Ontario's long-term economic recovery. There is deep and broad public interest in ensuring that the current mandate of the province's 36 conservation authorities is maintained and enhanced.

Since Bill 229 was introduced for First Reading on November 5, 2020:

- Canadian Environmental Law Association, with speakers from Environmental Defence, Ontario Nature and Credit Valley Conservation, hosted an informational [webinar](#) that had 1,286 unique views live and the recording of which has been viewed 946 times
- Over 4,000 [supporters](#) of Environmental Defence have emailed and phoned MPPs calling for the removal of Schedule 6
- Almost 19,000 [supporters](#) of Ontario Nature have sent emails to MPPs calling for the removal of Schedule 6
- Almost 13,000 [supporters](#) of David Suzuki Foundation have sent emails to MPPs calling for a halt to issuing Minister's Zoning Orders under the *Planning Act* and the removal of Schedule 6
- [Conservation Ontario](#), representing all 36 conservation authorities, has called for the removal of Schedule 6
- Resolutions have been passed in at least 40 municipal councils, including the Cities of [London](#), [Greater Sudbury](#), and [Thunder Bay](#), as well as the [Region of Peel](#) and [Township of South Frontenac](#), calling for the removal of Schedule 6
- Ontario's Greenbelt Council [wrote to Minister Clark](#) calling for removal of Schedule 6
- Ontario's Big City Mayors [approved a motion](#) to call for the removal of Schedule 6
- Skootamatta District Ratepayers Association, representing over 200 property owners, [wrote to the Minister Phillips](#) calling for the removal of Schedule 6
- Of the 45 deputations made during Standing Committee of Finance and Economic Affairs (SCFEA) hearings in response to a complex budget measures bill containing 44 schedules, over half of those deputations addressed or mentioned Schedule 6
- Of the over 20 witnesses who spoke to Schedule 6 at SCFEA hearings, all expressed significant concerns; none came forward in favour
- The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, with member associations in approximately 60 municipalities served by a conservation authority, wrote to [Minister Phillips](#) and [appeared before the SCFEA](#) calling for the removal of Schedule 6
- The Association of Municipalities of Ontario [wrote to the SCFEA](#) stating their "preferred option" is to "withdraw Schedule 6 from Bill 229 and work on these matters separately"

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- The Town of Ajax [appeared before the SCFEA](#) calling for the removal of Schedule 6
- The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) [wrote to the SCFEA](#) and, in addition to expressing strong concerns with many of the proposed amendments in Schedule 6, stated “Ontario’s conservation authorities provide a watershed level planning perspective that transcends municipal borders, one that OFA supports and one that deserves support, not only from the province but also from municipalities.”

The Ontario Government has named Bill 229 the Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 (Budget Measures) Act, 2020. The proposed amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* and other consequential amendments contained in Schedule 6 of Bill 229 are not related to protecting or supporting residents of Ontario during the pandemic. Further, Schedule 6 does not offer any assistance to residents of Ontario with respect to recovery. In fact, there will be no budgetary implications for the province associated with removing Schedule 6, as there was no spending announced associated with the operation of conservation authorities.

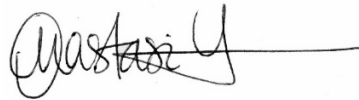
The public’s clear and wide-ranging interest in the value and effectiveness of conservation authorities merits independent, robust, and meaningful debate, outside of this budget measures bill. Please remove Schedule 6 now. Conservation authorities, municipalities and other interested organizations are ready and willing to work quickly to ensure that the accountability and transparency of conservation authorities are improved, while maintaining their critical role in protecting people and property from flooding and natural hazards.

Sincerely,

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION



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