

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) was invited to present expert opinion to the **Federal Subcommittee on Bill C-38 of the Standing Committee on Finance**, related to *Part III, Responsible Resources Development*.

Terry Rees, Executive Director of FOCA, made his address on May 28, 2012 at Parliament Hill. A 2-page summary follows:

FOCA's comments focus on three main concerns with the proposed Bill C-38, the *Budget Implementation Act*:

- 1) the process to make such significant changes short-circuits the democratic process and does not allow for the type and amount of reasoned discussion that important public policy deserves. Many important matters, including reforms to 70 separate Acts and important environmental legislation, are being considered as part of an unrealistically complicated, unprecedented omnibus Finance bill.
- 2) specific concerns related to the proposed changes to the Fisheries Act, and the significant negative implications that may result. The proposed changes to the Fisheries Act are regressive. The habitat provisions in (the existing) Section 35 of the Fisheries Act prohibit the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat (HADD), which has been the basis for ensuring aquatic resources are not impacted by shoreline or in-water projects, and that our fisheries are allowed to thrive. Instead of embracing ecosystem-based management, the proposed changes narrow the provisions protecting fish and fish habitat to focus only on identified fisheries. Whatever its shortcomings, the existing Act has breadth, and had consequences for offenders that were significant, including fines, and jail terms – a deterrent that was potent, and powerful.

3) For almost 50 years, Canada's Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) has been an incredibly valuable aquatic research. ELA has one of the longest, most complete and unique sets of information on water quality in the world. This data is crucial for monitoring and developing sound environmental and industrial policy. The health of our waters can dramatically impact our economy and Canadian society. Investing in this important facility and its researchers will provide benefits through better understanding of our freshwaters, for years to come. The notion that private industry or universities will be able to dedicate themselves and maintain this research over the long-term is false. The Government must reconsider the decision to close this facility and reinstate our commitment to the knowledge it provides our industry, our government(s) and civil society.

Following the committee meetings on this matter, recommendations will be made to the Standing Committee on Finance for possible amendment to the Bill prior to it going for third and final reading.

What can you do?

Public interest in the Budget Implementation Act will also continue to be considered prior to the Bill being voted on. All interested parties should express their concerns, questions and suggestions to:

Minister, Fisheries & Oceans, Hon. Keith Ashfield:

keith.ashfield@parl.gc.ca

Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca

your Member of Parliament:

visit www.foca.on.ca/Hot_Topics for links and more background