

SPEAKING NOTES

- Thank you, Chair Sandhu and members of the standing committee, for the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon.
- My name is Terry Rees and I'm the Executive Director of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations.
- I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the Budget Bill 229, and specifically to our concerns with proposed amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act found in Schedule 6 of Bill 229.
- ***FOCA believes Schedule 6 should be removed in its entirety from the Bill***
- As representatives for Ontario's 250,000 waterfront property owners, we have 55+ year tradition of supporting sustainable and affordable communities. Collectively these property owners contribute a conservative \$800 million annually in local property taxes, and we recognize a portion of these are directed via local levies to various Conservation Authorities.
- Our member associations are located in 60 different Ontario municipalities served by a Conservation Authority.
- What our residents, and our communities get in return for our investment is expert advice on managing our local resources; guidance that protects public safety and private property; and independent apolitical oversight for local land use planning, environmental monitoring and significant amounts of leveraged community stewardship of our water resources and other natural assets.
- We were pleased to be invited to Minister Yurek's consultations on Conservation Authorities in early 2020, both in Colborne in MPP Piccini's riding, and also in London.
- On both these occasions we presented FOCA's position that managing on a watershed level is essential to protect our families, our communities, our

infrastructure and our economy. We asked then, and still would like to know – if not the Conservation Authorities, then who?

- Conservation Authorities have many important responsibilities delegated to them by the Province. They are also governed by a Board that consists of their primary funders and clients – local municipalities.
- Local CA’s staff up with local expertise, and have access to the kind of local information, resources and conditions that inform prudent decisions. We believe that allowing the routine appeal of CA land use planning decisions to the Minister (of NRF) will have poorer outcomes for our communities and the natural assets they need to be liveable and sustainable.
- Integrated Watershed Management necessitates the need for an approach that operates across municipal jurisdictions – while still considering local priorities as identified by member municipalities. Integrated watershed Management has been advocated by the province’s Special Advisor on Flooding and was a leading recommendation in the Provincially-appointed Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group Interim Report.
- What we did not hear at the consultations earlier this year (nor have we seen in practice), was a compelling rationale for the broad changes being proposed in Schedule 6 of Bill 229. FOCA believes that any revisions to delegated responsibilities and related authority should come through a commitment to reforms (such as those conversations already underway between Conservation Ontario, local municipalities, AMO and the Province) , along with the appropriate public consultation and posting under the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights. Under the EBR Ontario citizens have a right to participate in government decisions affecting the environment and it is intended to allow the public the opportunity to participate in decisions that could impact Ontario’s: Air, water, land and wildlife

- Conservation Authorities play a significant role in these areas and as such these decisions about reform deserve and should be afforded the appropriate public oversight and transparency.
- We believe in an effective and affordable system to deliver sound and sustainable land use planning. Good land use management equates to good water management and to the protection of water quality and quantity so essential to all of us.
- Ontario's Conservation Authorities are uniquely positioned to do just that; BUT, they need the regulatory breadth and authority to discharge these duties. CAs currently are empowered to ensure proposals meet hazard lands, and source water protection policies. The Minister simply does not have the breadth of local knowledge and context to make these decisions, and an appeal to the office of the Minister as part of the normal course of land use planning will put us more at risk, and will cost us all more.
- When carrying out source protection and natural hazard functions, CA's apply ***science-based information***, tools and decision making to inform their decisions.
- We believe our communities deserve that standard of care
- So in conclusion; FOCA strongly encourages the Province to remove Schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229, and commit to a genuine consultation with the parties affected – Conservation Authorities, municipalities, and the public
- Any resulting “fine tuning” of the system, including greater clarity between CA's from both the MNRF and the MECP will allow this unique and highly celebrated model of watershed management to serve the economy of Ontario well and will ensure that the goals of the government continue to be supported.
- Many thanks for your attention today.
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