

Sent via email to: ombreview@ontario.ca



August 14, 2017

Ken Petersen
Manager, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Local Government and Planning Policy Division
Provincial Planning Policy Branch
777 Bay Street, Floor 13
Toronto ON, M5G 2E5

Dear Mr. Petersen;

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Bill 139 (Schedule 3), the proposed *Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017: Amendments to the Planning Act*.

FOCA is the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, an incorporated non-profit organization that represents over 500 waterfront property owners' groups, with over 50,000 member families. For over 50 years, FOCA has spoken on behalf of, and supported, Ontario's 250,000 waterfront property owners. Planning decisions made at the municipal and provincial level have a significant impact to our members. As a provincial voice for waterfront property owners we advocate that our members understand and become involved in local planning issues that will impact them. The review and update of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) has been requested by our members for a number of years and we welcome the update to the planning process in Ontario.

The current OMB process often put our members at a disadvantage as they lacked the expertise and the funding to fully participate in OMB appeals. As such FOCA commends the addition of the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre as part of Bill 139. FOCA would encourage the province to provide adequate support to the Support Centre to enable the Support Centre to be a valuable resource to our members.

We understand the proposed changes will give local municipal councils more authority in regards to local planning decisions which we agree is important for local democracy. Rural municipal councils often lack the resources and capacity to undertake significant planning processes and in some cases the OMB provided citizens with the ability to hold a council to account for their planning decisions. With the changes to the ability to appeal some planning decisions municipal councils will have greater authority for planning decisions. As such, we recommend that the Province provide all rural municipalities with the needed resources and

capacity to follow a rigorous procedure to develop their Official Plan and that the Province ensures all municipalities across Ontario have a current Official Plan that incorporates good planning practices and includes a thorough public consultation process.

A final consideration: since there are a significant number of seasonal residents in many rural Ontario municipalities, it is important to provide adequate opportunities to have them included in the development and review of OPs. Consultation must include options that allow for participating remotely, beyond just open houses or meetings that are locally held and advertised.

Again, FOCA applauds the government for their work to improve the planning process in Ontario. FOCA will continue to encourage our members to become involved in their local planning process and their municipal elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Kennedy".

Terry Kennedy, President, FOCA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Rees".

Terry Rees, Executive Director, FOCA

On behalf of FOCA