



For Immediate Release

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Burlington, Ontario

Conservation Halton grateful for efforts of the Minister of Environment, Conservation, and Parks, but is shocked and disappointed in the last-minute amendment to Bill 229

BURLINGTON—Conservation Halton (CH) is grateful for the constructive conversations with the Minister of Environment, Conservation, and Parks that have taken place over the last few days to address amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, contained in Omnibus Budget Bill 229.

“The open dialogue with the Minister over the last few days led to some positive amendments regarding planning, enforcement, governance, and the ability for CH to continue the responsible management of our parks without unnecessary bureaucratic red tape,” said Hassaan Basit, President and CEO, Conservation Halton. “We appreciate the Minister’s willingness to have a meaningful conversation with us to try and address some of our concerns and work together towards safeguarding the ability of Conservation Authorities (CAs) to continue the important work of protecting life, property, and the environment.”

CH is, however, extremely disappointed to learn of a last-minute amendment inserted into Schedule 6, as well as several other changes that were not addressed despite our concerns. The most egregious additional amendment prohibits CAs from denying permits for developments if presented with a Minister’s Zoning Order (MZO) issued by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This amendment, despite the ability to attach conditions to permits, may significantly weaken our ability to make consistent science-based watershed management decisions in the interest of public health and safety.

We remain concerned at the unnecessary haste with which Schedule 6 was passed by the legislature today and will be vigilant on how these amendments are implemented. CH will continue to study the legislation in greater detail in the coming days along with our partner municipalities, and other stakeholders.

“Above all else, CH is grateful for the unwavering support of our local mayors and councils, regional council, our partner municipalities, watershed residents, the agriculture community, and network of supporters that have reached out to the Province to address their concerns. The support for CAs is inspirational,” said Basit.

CH hopes to continue to work with the Minister of Environment, Conservation, and Parks to further address our concerns and ensure that CAs are consulted during the next steps of formulating and implementing regulations for this legislation. We also want to ensure that as the

unintended negative consequences of these changes are realized, the Province will commit to fixing them as quickly as they changed the legislation.

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Conservation Halton is the community based environmental agency that protects, restores, and manages the natural resources in its watershed. The organization has staff that includes ecologists, land use planners, engineers, foresters and educators, along with a network of volunteers, who are guided by a Board of Directors comprised of municipally elected and appointed citizens. Conservation Halton is recognized for its stewardship of creeks, forests and Niagara Escarpment lands through science-based programs and services.

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