

MAYORS WANT PROVINCE TO STOP PLANS TO 'GUT' CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

DAVID LEA
dlea@metroland.com

Halton's mayors and the board of Conservation Halton (CH) are calling on the province to scrap planned changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, which many say will drain conservation authorities of their ability to protect the environment.

On Nov. 17 the four mayors joined members of the CH board of directors in sending a letter to Premier Doug Ford and Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Jeff Yurek requesting they engage in expedient consultations with conservation authorities over the proposed changes contained in the 2020 Ontario budget.

In the meantime, the group wants the potential amendments withdrawn.

Hassaan Basit, presi-

dent and CEO of Conservation Halton, discussed some of the issues he has with the province's proposals in an online appeal to the community for assistance.

"Conservation Halton has legislated responsibility to ensure development does not occur in flood hazard areas and that our creeks, valleys and wetlands are not adversely impacted. We work hard to ensure new development is balanced and that our communities are safe and livable, with ample green space," said Basit.

"The amendments proposed by the provincial government outline a process whereby developers and others can go around conservation authorities to have permits approved by the province directly."

Currently, conservation authorities can deny devel-

opers building permits under certain circumstances.

Basit also voiced concerns about another proposed change that would require all municipally appointed members of conservation authority boards to be elected officials.

Basit said putting people on those boards who are required to represent the interests of their respective municipalities, as opposed to the interests of the conservation authority, creates a setting ripe for conflict of interest.

In an email statement, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks spokesperson Lindsay Davidson argued the changes will improve the governance, oversight and accountability of conservation authorities, while respecting taxpayer dollars by giving municipalities more say over the conser-

vation authority services they pay for.

"The proposed changes would provide a new mechanism for the province to become involved in the issuance of permits, where there are matters of provincial interest," said Davidson.

"The scope of this mechanism will be further determined through the development and consultation regulations."

He noted conservation authorities will still be able to provide advice and support to municipalities and the province for appeals of Planning Act decisions.

Davidson also pointed out the changes will let the minister, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, appoint a temporary administrator to assume control of all a conservation authority's operations if it was determined

that conservation authority has failed or was likely to fail to comply with provincial law.

On Nov. 16 Oakville councillors voted unanimously to direct the province to repeal or alter their proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act.

During the meeting, Oakville Mayor Rob Burton referred to the proposed changes as an attempt to "gut" the conservation authorities and "an attack" on their integrity.

He said the new legislation would remove or significantly hinder the ability of conservation authorities to participate in and support local planning appeal processes.

Burton also said the changes would let the minister of natural resources and forestry make decisions on development pro-

posals without the consideration of local conditions, conservation authority board approved policies, watershed data or technical expertise.

Davidson said conservation authorities will continue to have a core role in preparing and protecting against the impacts of natural hazards, maintaining and managing conservation lands, and roles in drinking water source protection.

"In the coming weeks, the ministry will be developing and consulting on upcoming regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act," said Davidson.

"We will consider the feedback as we move forward to ensure we put conservation authorities in the best position possible to be able to deliver on their core mandate."

Our 21st Annual

Super WINTER Special

HASSELL AUTOMOTIVE

- Oil & Filter (Includes up to 6 litres regular oil.)
- Complete top to bottom check over.
- Installation of winter tires (already on rims) included.

EXTRAS

- \$5.00 Tim's Card
- Windshield Washer Fluid
- 12 Pack of Pop

NOW ON!

only

\$7495*

Prices are +HST

\$9495*

Synthetic oil (up to 6 litres)

Call for an Appointment

*Most Vehicles.



AUTOPRO

HASSELL AUTOMOTIVE

SALES & SERVICE

45 Mountainview Road North, Georgetown, Ontario

905.877.7958

e-mail: hassellsauto@bellnet.ca • www.hassellautomotive.com