

CONSERVATION HALTON OPPOSES BILL 229 AMENDMENT

SAYS NEW RULES WILL LET DEVELOPERS OVERRIDE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

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The president of Conservation Halton says he is shocked and disappointed with a last-minute provincial decision to amend a section of Bill 229, which he argues will hinder the ability of conservation authorities to protect the environment.

In a Tuesday, Dec. 8 statement, president and CEO Hasaan Basit noted that constructive conversations had taken place with Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks Jeff Yurek to address recent changes to the Conservation Authorities Act.

Basit took issue with these amendments, noting in mid-November that they outlined a process whereby developers and others could go around the conservation authorities to have permits approved by the province.

Conservation Halton (CH) is a community-based environmental agency that protects local ecosystems in partnership with its watershed municipalities. Part of its work has involved the regulation of development.

Basit said discussions with the province followed, for which he was grateful, noting the open dialogue led to some positive amendments regarding planning, enforcement, governance, and the ability for CH to continue responsible management of its parks without unnecessary bureaucratic red tape.

The local conservation authority head, however, said he is extremely disappointed to learn of a last-minute amendment and several other changes that were not addressed.

"The most egregious addition-

al amendment prohibits conservation authorities from denying permits for developments if presented with a Minister Zoning Order (MZO) issued by the minister of municipal affairs and housing," said Basit.

"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."

Basit also took issue with how quickly the amendments were passed on Dec. 8.

He said CH will continue to study the legislation in greater detail in the coming days.

A spokesperson with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing said following consultations with conservation authorities and others, the government made amendments to provide clarity to some elements of the proposal and refine the details to ensure the changes can be effectively implemented and put conservation authorities in the best position to deliver their core mandate.



Graham Paine/MetroLand

Nancy Hyatt-Jacobs was among those from Sustainable Milton who showed their support for Ontario's conservation authorities, demonstrating out front of MPP Parm Gill's Main Street constituency office.

"In the coming weeks, the gov-

ernment will quickly be moving forward with consulting on a series of proposed regulations,"

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