

November 15, 2018

The Right Honourable Doug Ford
Premier's Office
Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Delivered via E-mail and Regular Mail

Re: Environmental Commissioner of Ontario: Bill 57

Dear Premier Ford:

We are writing to express our grave concern that your government is reportedly poised to eliminate the office of Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO).

For over twenty-five years, Ontario citizens have greatly benefitted from relying on the ECO as an independent, non-partisan officer of the Legislature to hold all governments accountable for their decisions and efforts in protecting Ontario's vast and unparalleled environment. Ontario has one of the richest natural and environmental legacies in the world, with most of the Great Lakes bordering our province, with vast portions of the world's critical boreal forests, and with beautiful lakes and rivers in which Ontarians paddle, boat, fish, swim, cottage and drink. Ensuring the sustainability and health of our natural environment is critically important to Ontario's identity, culture and economy. Actions which hold polluters accountable is essential, as you have noted in your own remarks in recent months.

Over the years, the ECO has produced numerous in-depth reports on key issues facing Ontario, from climate change to endangered species. This kind of independent, clear-eyed analysis of the impact and effectiveness of government actions and policies is critically important and very valuable in highlighting whether government actions are resulting in reduced environmental risks or not. We are facing a combined climate and biodiversity crisis and growing impacts on human health. We need the kind of quality evidence-based recommendations – and environmental accountability -- that the ECO has regularly produced now more than ever.

In our view, eliminating the ECO is contrary to these environmental protection objectives. Since 1993, the ECO and its specialized staff have informed and empowered Ontarians to effectively exercise their legal rights under the *Environmental Bill of Rights* (EBR) to safeguard the environment and public health and safety. In addition, the annual and special reports filed by the ECO have flagged opportunities to improve and strengthen Ontario's environmental safety net.

Address replies to: Theresa McClenaghan, Canadian Environmental Law Association, 1500 – 55 University Avenue, Toronto, ON M5J 2H7, 416-960-2284 x 7219 or theresa@cela.ca

Therefore, we collectively call on your government to ensure that the ECO continues to exist as a stand-alone, independent office with all of its powers, duties and responsibilities intact under the EBR. We therefore call on you not to proceed with the revisions proposed in schedule 15 to Bill 57 which eliminate the stand-alone office of the ECO. We would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you urgently to further discuss and describe the importance of the ECO role to all Ontarians and Ontario's natural environment. Please reply c/o Theresa McClenaghan at the coordinates below.

Yours very truly,

Theresa McClenaghan
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Canadian Environmental Law Association

John Jackson
Chair
Grand River Environmental Network

Yannick Beaudoin
Director General for Ontario and Northern Canada
The David Suzuki Foundation

Joanna Kerr
Executive Director
Greenpeace

Tim Gray
Executive Director
Environmental Defence

Doris Grinspun
Chief Executive Officer
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Jack Gibbons
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cc. Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Official Opposition
John Fraser, Leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario
Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario