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Attention: Julia Holder

Policy Analyst

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Policy Division

Natural Resources Conservation Policy Branch, Water Resources Section

Subject: Ontario Woodlot Association Comments on the Conservation Authorities Act Review Discussion Paper

The Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA) is dedicated to the wise use of Ontario's woodlands and wetlands. With our 1,500 members and 20 Chapters across the Province, we carry out public education programs through workshops, field days, woodlot tours and conferences. We also partner in forest research and certification and advocate on behalf of owners of forested land in Ontario.

The mandate of the Conservation Authorities (CA), particularly when it comes to their watershed approach to managing natural resources, makes them a good fit with the objectives of the OWA. The CA network throughout Ontario enables us to forge partnerships on a local project basis. Whether it be tree planting, shoreline naturalization, controlling invasive species, managing for species at risk, wetland evaluations & mapping, or some other forest issue, being able to collaborate with local Conservation Authorities means our OWA staff and members are better prepared and able to communicate the importance of sustainable holistic management & the impacts those decisions have on woodlands & wetlands.

There are many aspects to forestry in Ontario, from seed collection to value-added products and from basic research to public education, and much of it is dealt with on an ad hoc basis. The OWA would support any initiative which clarifies roles and responsibilities as they pertain to Ontario's woodlands and wetlands, whether they are provincial, municipal or those of the CA's.

The CA's, as major landowners in Ontario, play a significant role in the future health of our forested lands. Going forward, we see as a priority increased cooperation between our organizations. We support the CA's in their efforts to manage their lands sustainably and would argue for funding that is stable and permanent in this regard. We also support a large publicly owned land base and the CA's ability to purchase or be gifted lands in perpetuity. In addition CA's lands should have publicly reviewed & approved management plans for each of their conservation areas.

CA's play a significant role in training and preparing young foresters, ecologists, botanists, hydrologists and planners. They will become the stewardship leaders of the future. The OWA supports the CA's continued training and employment opportunities for aspiring resource managers. And further, we support the necessity of, and funding requirements for, qualified forest managers which should include Registered Professional Foresters & Forest Ecologists as permanent staff.

Woodlots and wetlands may provide their owners with recreation opportunities, and occasionally some revenue, but their true value is in the benefits enjoyed by society as a whole: clean air, clean water, weather moderation, biodiversity and wildlife habitat to name just a few. The work of the CA's and our members in educating the public on the importance of retaining these natural resources on our landscape will be key to what kind of Ontario we have in the future. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Sexsmith".

David Sexsmith

President of the Ontario Woodlot Association