



Bill 6 – *Great Lakes Protection Act, 2013*

Date: November 22, 2013

Submitted to: The Standing Committee on
Regulations and Private Bills

Submitted by: The Ontario Bar Association



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du Barreau canadien



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Introduction

The Ontario Bar Association (the "OBA") appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills with respect to Bill 6, *Great Lakes Protection Act, 2013* (the "Bill"), introduced by the Ministry of Environment.

The OBA

Established in 1907, the OBA is the largest legal advocacy organization in the province, representing more than 18,000 lawyers, judges, law professors and law students in Ontario. OBA members practice law in no fewer than 38 different sectors. In addition to providing legal education for its members, the OBA has assisted government and other policy makers with countless policy initiatives - both in the interest of the legal profession and in the interest of the public.

This submission was jointly prepared by the OBA's Environmental Law and Municipal Law Sections, which include the leading practitioners in their respective fields.

Collectively, these OBA sections have over 800 members, who would count among their clients a wide variety of stakeholders interested in effective and efficient environmental regulation in this province, including developers, municipalities, corporations, residents groups, and environmental protection organizations.

Comments

The OBA supports the principles behind the Bill, and the important goal of continuing to ensure the long term protection of the Great Lakes.

More attention needs to be paid to the protection of the Great Lakes, which contain almost 20% of our planet's fresh surface water. This Bill will be a useful, if small, step in the right direction, as it should help governments and communities to work together on the significant threats facing the Great Lakes. It will also establish a potentially useful mechanism for integrating Great Lakes protection initiatives, such as shoreline protection areas, into land-use planning documents across municipal boundaries.

We support the concept of the Guardians' Council as a forum for politicians, First Nations and ENGO representatives, and members of the scientific, agriculture and business sectors, to identify priorities and projects and share information. While the Council could be created as an administrative entity, its approval by the Legislature in this Bill will give its deliberations more prominence and its recommendations more force.

We do wish to note that this is one of a series of provincial plans that will be implemented in part by municipalities bringing their Official Plans into conformity with designated policies of approved



initiatives. There is an increasingly complex layer of provincial plans that municipalities (and therefore landowners) must consider, including those put in place under the *Clean Water Act*, *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*, *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act*, *Greenbelt Act*, *Places to Grow Act*, *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act* and the *Planning Act*. The OBA encourages the province to ensure that there is policy clarity for all stakeholders with respect to multiple plans.

Conclusion

The OBA encourages the province to continue to develop an appropriate regulatory scheme for protection of these irreplaceable water bodies, which are so central to Ontario's environment and economy.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Committee on this Bill.