

Alert from FOCA

FOCA is alerting cottagers across Ontario of two concerns. One is a threat to the Lake Partner program of water quality monitoring and a new concern which is the plan to eliminate the offices of Environment Minister of Environment., Both actions which would make it difficult to respond to any environmental threats.

Please read the information included from FOCA and help by letter writing and signing the petition.

As President of your FOCA Board of Directors, I am writing with a new and important call-to-action for each of you, all across Ontario. This letter is being sent to each of the Presidents/Chairs of FOCA's 500+ member associations, and I hope you will share it with your members.

At the FOCA Fall Seminar on October 27, 2018, I had asked our members to write the Ontario Minister of the Environment, Conservation & Parks, in support of the ongoing efforts of the Lake Partner Program of water quality monitoring. Thank you to everyone who has already copied FOCA on your letters! If you have not yet answered that call, I encourage you to get more information, and a template letter, here: <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program-overview/>.

However, today I write to you with a new concern:

On November 15, 2018, the Ontario Government introduced Bill 57, including sudden plans to eliminate the office of the **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO)**, and purporting to transfer some of the ECO's roles to the Auditor General and the Ministry of the Environment, Parks and Conservation.

This move would defeat the entire purpose of an independent, non-partisan officer in the important role of environmental oversight. The ECO is our environmental watchdog, appointed by the Ontario Legislature, not the government in power--specifically to attempt to shield the ECO from undue political interference.

ECO Dianne Saxe (centre) at the FOCA office in 2016

The ECO's role supports public participation through the Environmental Registry, as well as government accountability for decisions that affect our environment, now and into the future. The ECO's office reviews and reports on government progress on daunting environmental issues such as invasive species, water protection, pesticide management, and climate change.

For 25 years, these rights--and the ECO's powers, duties and functions--have been enshrined in the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR). When the EBR was up for review in 2016, FOCA encouraged you to participate in the consultations and provide your input during the comment period. Altogether, more than 18,000 Ontarians participated in that discussion.

After the government's announcement on November 15, 2018, FOCA joined our colleagues representing the country's most established environmental organizations, in signing a joint letter to Premier Ford, denouncing the plan to eliminate the office of the ECO. [Click here to read the joint letter](#). (download PDF, 4 pages)

Today, on behalf of our membership across Ontario, FOCA has sent our own letter to the Premier and party leaders, strongly opposing the elimination of the office of the ECO. [Click here to read FOCA's letter](#). (download PDF, 2 pgs)

Now, we need you to add your voice, in this fight to save the office of the ECO. Help us show the government how much Ontarians care about the environment. Here are 3 ways you can help:

1. Add your name to the online petition: <http://www.greenprosperity.ca/eco/>
2. Tell your MPP you oppose the elimination of the office of the ECO. Find links to your MPP, here: <https://represent.opennorth.ca/demo/>, and echo the wording in FOCA's letter to the Premier. *Remember to copy me on your letters!*
3. Share this information widely with others in your lake association, with colleagues, family, and friends.

Thank you,

Marlin Horst

President, FOCA Board of Directors

president@foca.on.ca