

Bill 228, *Resource Management and Safety Act*'s Various ERO Postings

AMO'S SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
FORESTRY

ERO 019-9286
ERO 019-9299

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Executive Summary

AMO appreciates the opportunity to comment on specific proposals under Bill 228, *Resource Management and Safety Act*. This submission includes comments on the two Environmental Registry (ERO) postings associated with the Bill and as the Bill included *Forest Fires Prevention Act* amendments, we are also sharing highlights of our comments on the summer's related ERO posting (019-8756), which are relevant as the Ministry prepares for implementation.

AMO recognizes that the changes proposed under Bill 228 and the associated ERO postings are aimed at improving health and safety for Ontarians. AMO appreciates the Province's focus on these important policy areas, which complement local communities' efforts to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. We are pleased to provide some comments for the Province to consider as it takes the next steps to implement the various proposals.

Bill 228, *Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024*

Geologic Carbon Storage Act (ERO 019-9299)

Climate change is a critical issue for municipalities impacting all aspects of municipal delivery and human health and safety. It takes concerted actions across all governments to address its significant challenges. AMO agrees that commercial carbon capture and storage can play a part in reducing carbon emissions – especially in the context of a technology agnostic approach to increasing Ontario's energy supply by 75% which could include bringing new carbon emitting energy generation online. This work must be part of a long-term transition to a clean, reliable, affordable energy system and a commitment to achieving net-zero emissions.

While there are potential positives for climate change and economic development, commercial storage also must be managed in a socially and environmentally responsible way that mitigates any risks or impacts on municipalities. For example, potential leaks when storing carbon that could impact source water, or secondary impacts of transporting carbon on municipal roads, to name a few. Provincial requirements and oversight are needed to ensure this.

AMO supports the measured approach the Ministry is taking to engage stakeholders at various points when developing a commercial carbon storage framework – especially with southwest municipalities potentially hosting storage projects. AMO also supports the inclusion of provisions in the framework for municipal endorsement of storage projects – which will provide an opportunity to share their local perspectives on proposals and identify impacts on their communities. Continued robust community engagement will help in designing and implementing a comprehensive framework that

builds in the right protections, roles, and buy-in for these projects.

Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act (ERO 019-9286)

AMO appreciates the Province's leadership to prevent, decrease, or eliminate a hazard to the public or to the environment from oil and gas wells. Leaking wells can lead to gas migrating away from the well which may contaminate drinking water or result in other hazards that can impact people and the environment. By allowing the Ministry to directly address a hazardous well in situations where an operator is unwilling or unable to address the hazard because of death, insolvency or bankruptcy of an operator, it helps to strengthen public safety and protecting the environment for local communities.

Forest Fires Prevention Act (ERO-019-8756)

AMO appreciates the Province's approach to openly consult with municipalities and other key partners in improving our collective preparedness, prevention, and response to wildland fires. Wildfires impact us all, from direct damage to forests and property along with health and safety risks to residents in municipalities within the fire region, to secondary impacts to municipalities outside the fire region such as poor air quality.

In August, AMO provided [comments](#) in response to the Ministry's consultations – with advice on funding and program changes that could help modernize and improve wildland fire mitigation. In the comments AMO also supported the proposal for the Minister's authority or scope of agreements to clarify mitigating (e.g., prescribed burns) or remedying (e.g., rehabilitation of a forest) efforts, as well as provisions to strengthen Forest Fire Emergency Plans – especially if it results in better forest fire planning and prevention in consultation with municipalities. However, AMO strongly cautions the use of these provisions that would result in any downloaded responsibilities, costs, or burdensome requirements on municipalities – many of the municipalities in the fire region can be smaller municipalities with limited tax bases that may struggle to prepare comprehensive plans or build appropriate resources by themselves. This principle should also include focusing on enhancing Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) firefighters and services who have the expert forest fire knowledge versus structural firefighters (or other forest firefighters from other jurisdictions) - understaffing can put pressure on municipal residents and resources to fill gaps which are not equipped to be the first line of defence against wildfires.

AMO agrees that there is a role to play for everyone in this work, including municipalities – but it also should include provincial resources that match the magnitude of the problem which will only intensify in the future due to climate change impacts. We encourage the Ministry to continue playing a leadership role as well as listen to the comments and evidence from experts to help inform regulations, programs, and resources that will support implementing a successful wildland fire framework.