

July 20, 2020

BY EMAIL TO: minister.mecp@ontario.ca

The Hon. Jeff Yurek
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
College Park, 5th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Yurek:

RE: SCHEDULE 6 OF BILL 197 – SECOND READING DEBATE

We have carefully reviewed your statements made in the Ontario Legislature on July 15, 2020 during Second Reading Debate on Bill 197.

In particular, we note as Jennifer French MPP quoted portions of CELA’s preliminary analysis of the environmental assessment (EA) changes contained in Schedule 6 of Bill 197, you interjected by claiming that the statements are “utterly false”, “untrue,” and “obtuse” (*Hansard*, pages 8778-79).

We note that you subsequently withdrew these pejorative comments at the direction of the Speaker (*Hansard*, page 8779). However, we can only assume that you originally made these erroneous statements because you may not have had an opportunity to obtain or read CELA’s preliminary analysis. Accordingly, we have attached a copy of CELA’s analysis for your immediate review.

For the past 50 years, CELA has been extensively involved in the development and implementation of Ontario’s EA program, and we were at the forefront of the legislative debates when the *Environmental Assessment Act (EAA)* was first introduced in 1974. Since that time, CELA has represented low-income individuals and disadvantaged or vulnerable communities in numerous precedent-setting court cases, public hearings and other administrative proceedings under the *EAA*.

Given our EA knowledge and experience, CELA was appointed by a former Environment Minister to an expert advisory committee established by Ontario to obtain advice on EA reform. Unfortunately, none of the committee’s recommendations are addressed by Schedule 6 in Bill 197.

In light of CELA’s half-century of EA expertise, we fully stand by our preliminary analysis of Schedule 6 of Bill 197. We further note that the statements quoted by Ms. French are, in fact, clearly reflected not only in Schedule 6 and the government’s own explanatory note that accompanies Bill 197, but they are also confirmed by the information “bulletin” that has been posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario.

After you were first appointed as the Minister, CELA has unsuccessfully requested an opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss Ontarians' environmental priorities for protecting public health and safety and safeguarding the air, land and water of the province.

Given your unfortunate remarks during Second Reading debate on Bill 197, we are compelled to strongly reiterate this request for a meeting with you in order to set the record straight on what Schedule 6 does – and does not do – to Ontario's EA program.

We look forward to your timely response to this urgent request.

Yours truly,

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION



Theresa A. McClenaghan
Executive Director



Richard D. Lindgren
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Encl.