



200 - 2006 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6J 2B3
www.wcel.org
tel: 604.684.7378
fax: 604.684.1312
toll free: 1.800.330.WCEL (in BC)
email: admin@wcel.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2017

Canadians demand big changes to environmental assessment law

Environmental lawyers say Expert Panel report should be a floor, not a ceiling

OTTAWA – The report released today by the Expert Panel reviewing Canada’s environmental assessment (EA) processes calls for a major shift in decision-making that will help protect Canadians and the environment, experts say. But the government has its work cut out for it, as it continues to listen to Canadians in developing a next-generation EA law.

The Panel’s report lays out a number of clear recommendations to guide assessments for proposed projects such as mines, pipelines and dams. These recommendations include a requirement that decision-making be based on sustainability; collaborative decision-making with Indigenous peoples; meaningful and ongoing public participation; and mechanisms for achieving Canada’s climate goals.

The Panel also calls for a single authority to be responsible for environmental “impact assessments” and decisions, subject to an appeal to federal Cabinet – which means taking responsibility away from the National Energy Board (NEB) when it comes to reviewing new energy projects.

“The Panel has given the government a clear roadmap for how to improve decision-making that affects Canadians and the environment. It’s not perfect, but it’s certainly a step in the right direction,” said Anna Johnston, Staff Counsel at West Coast Environmental Law. “We encourage all Canadians to stay involved and urge the government to build on the recommendations to create a visionary new EA law.”

The report follows a cross-country engagement process, during which the Panel heard from academic and legal experts, Indigenous peoples, industry representatives and Canadians about their priorities for federal environmental assessment. The country’s leading experts on EA have recommended an [integrated set of reforms](#) to bring this important law into the 21st century – many of which are echoed in the Panel’s report.

“Canadians have spoken, and they’ve sent a clear message that our environmental assessment processes are fundamentally broken,” said Jessica Clogg, Executive Director and Senior Counsel. “This report shows that the Expert Panel heard what Canadians were saying and took their concerns seriously – now it’s time for the federal government to turn these recommendations into law.”

The government has launched a 30-day public comment period on the Expert Panel’s report and recommendations. Canadians are invited to share their views until May 5, 2017 at www.letstalkea.ca/.

–30–

For more information, please contact:

Anna Johnston | Staff Counsel, West Coast Environmental Law
604-340-2304, anna_johnston@wcel.org

Additional resources:

[Expert Panel Report - Building Common Ground: A New Vision for Impact Assessment in Canada](#)

[Press Release - Canadians have high expectations for assessment law reform, environmental experts say](#)