

Environmental Assessment Moves Ahead

By Mary Ann Coleman, October 2004

Over the last couple of months there has been a lot of activity on the environmental assessment file. The EA Reform Caucus and NBEN member groups put their heads together and, with the assistance of environmental lawyer Juli Abouchar, came up with some dynamite recommendations.

Following that, the Department of Environment and Local Government (DELG) held a multistakeholder consultation on September 23, 2004. This was an interesting event, with some very interesting possible results as industry and environmental groups were able to reach consensus in surprising areas. At the end of the day, the Deputy Minister, Hermel Vienneau, committed to moving ahead rapidly on the areas of consensus and to having more sessions on the more difficult areas such as participant funding and the development of the schedules.

Consensus decisions identified during the wrap up included;

1. A purpose for the act or regulation
2. Criteria for assessment including sustainability
3. Panel reviews for some projects
4. Public input in developing schedules
5. Public consultation early in the process that carries on thorough to the follow-up and includes the Department providing responses to citizens and rationale for decisions
6. Improved follow-up process
7. A process for changes to a project

During the introductory remarks, it was noted that the government has already made a number of recent changes to the regulation to achieve improvements in transparency and streamlining. These changes flow from recommendations provided to the government during a consultation conducted with industry in 2003. Hopefully we will find that the NGO recommendations and the results of this consultation get acted upon as quickly.

One note to the wise - there is a lot of movement in the direction of class assessments. Environmental groups would be wise to bone up on this topic in preparation for upcoming sessions.

The Department will be producing summary notes from the consultation.

For more information, read the EA Reform Caucus recommendations at:

[/private/eia/report_sept04_e.pdf](#)