

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Presentation to the Standing Committee of the Ontario Legislature regarding Bill 14, The Environmental Assessment Act, 1975

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My name is Linda Cardini and I am speaking on behalf of the Toronto Field Naturalists Club. The Club's activities include the establishment and protection of natural areas in the Metropolitan Toronto region, the study of plant life and wildlife, assisting local governments in projects of interest to naturalists, and improvement of environmental quality. We list among our 1500 members, judges, lawyers, university professors, environmental planners, scientists, high school and university students, and amateur naturalists from all walks of life.

Because we are not experts in the law, we cannot make detailed comments on The Environmental Assessment Act. We recognize that the bill could play a critical role in ensuring full consideration to environmental factors in planning and decision-making, and are therefore in favor of its being passed.

However, we would like to see a greater role for public interest groups in the environmental assessment process. Specifically, we believe that public interest groups such as ours should be consulted when the Government drafts the regulations which will follow the bill. In addition, we believe that any individual should have the right to take legal action, rather than just the Minister, as now provided in Section 29.

To elaborate on the second point, I wish to point out that our Club is now conducting detailed field surveys of plant and animal life in Toronto's ravines. We are the only organization with expertise in this area of local natural resources. We would therefore want to have the opportunity to take legal action to protect the ravines from adverse development projects, if the Government was unwilling to do so under provisions of the Environmental Assessment Act.

In closing, we fully endorse the concept of environmental assessment and commend the Government for introducing Bill 14 as amended. To fully ensure a role for all segments of the public in the assessment process, we urge you to consider the points made above, as well as those made by other environmental organizations in their submissions to your committee.

July 10, 1975