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INTERVENOR

*Dedicated to environmental equity, justice,
health for over 50 years*

From Legislation to Realization: The Right to a Healthy Environment in Canada

Seeking to establish and uphold the right to a healthy environment is a core element of CELA's mandate, and we have been advocating for it since the 1970s. This right is important because low-income communities are often adversely and disproportionately affected by environmental threats, making strong legal protections crucial. With the right to a healthy environment now recognized in federal law, we both celebrate this milestone and call on the federal government to implement these rights and make environmental justice a reality for all. Read more in this [new blog post](#).

Casework

Building New (and untested) Nuclear: One of the federal government's first "Building Canada" major projects is the controversial Darlington New Build nuclear project. Despite concerns about incomplete design, untested technology, and major gaps in safety assessments, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission approved the construction license - leaving key safety questions for staff to address later. As CELA's Executive Director Theresa

McClenaghan notes, the community deserves a transparent process that addresses these risks before decisions are rushed to meet artificial timelines. Read more on CELA's [casework page](#).

Richmond Landfill Saga Continues: In our longest running case file, CELA recently filed legal and technical submissions on behalf of our client in relation to a [controversial](#) "Hydraulic Control System" (HCS) that the proponent proposes to construct at the closed Richmond Landfill near Napanee. If approved, the HCS is intended to pump leachate-impacted groundwater, provide some limited pre-treatment, and discharge it via a forcemain into a stormwater pond from where it may flow off-site unimpeded. CELA's submissions identify a number of significant concerns about the design and effectiveness of the HCS, the inadequacy of the supporting documentation, and the risk of further adverse impacts. Read more on CELA's [casework page](#).

Unprecedented 20-year License: The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) issued its decision on the next license for the Darlington nuclear station, granting Ontario Power Generation an unprecedented 20-year license. CELA, Durham Nuclear Awareness, and the Slovenian Home Association strongly opposed such a lengthy term, noting that two- or three-year licenses were once standard and even 10-year licenses are too long.

We are deeply concerned this decision will reduce the ability of nearby communities to understand the critical issues that arise in nuclear plant licensing, and to hold OPG to account for decisions that directly affect them.

Other processes, such as midterm reports and regulatory oversight reports, have not proven to provide meaningful opportunities for public engagement comparable to full hearings during license renewals, especially given the highly qualitative and subjective approach to Canadian nuclear plant licensing by the CNSC. Read the full [joint submission here](#).

Law Reform

Define “National Interest”: A coalition of Canada’s leading environmental, nature and climate organizations sent an open letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney and key Cabinet ministers calling on the federal government to adopt seven clear, transparent criteria for determine which projects are truly in the national interest under the *Building Canada Act*. Read the [media release here](#).

Urgent Action Needed on Cooling: Children attending child care in settings without cooling face serious health impacts from sweltering temperatures during heat waves. CELA, along with health and child care advocates, recently called on the province to support cooling in child care facilities. Read more on [our website](#).

Keep Radionuclides Under Review: In June 2025, despite long-standing calls from over 125 environment and health advocacy organizations, Canadian and U.S. officials recommended dropping radionuclides from further review as Chemicals of Mutual Concern under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. CELA and other advocates submitted a joint critique urging the Great Lakes Executive Committee to send radionuclides forward for detailed screening, citing the extensive footprint of nuclear facilities in the basin, health impacts, and the need for stronger government oversight. The submission and supporting documents are [available here](#).

Resources

Right to Healthy Housing: RentSafe, the Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and the Environment and CELA have launched a new project to mobilize intersectoral strategies for climate resilience in low-income rental housing, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Intersectoral Action Fund. Read more about the [project here](#).

Do you have an environmental law issue you need help with? Know someone else who does? Learn more about [how CELA can help](#).

Support Our Work: A tax-creditable gift to the Canadian Environmental Law Foundation ensures that CELA can continue to provide research and educational support for environmental law reform, and legal assistance to low-income communities who are adversely - and disproportionately - affected by environmental issues. Your support ensures access to resources about environmental law and policy history - valuable information that can be destroyed or withheld from the public by unsympathetic governments.

Make a one-time gift or become a monthly donor to ensure we all have access to the history of environmental law for generations to come.

Support Our Work

From the Foundation

September Feature: This month's feature from the Canadian Environmental Law Archive is "A Brief History of Environmental Law", written by then CELA Counsel Heather Mitchell in 1977. See the [full paper on the Archive](#).

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