



INTERVENOR

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health for over 50 years*

Source Water Protection is Essential for First Nations Drinking Water Safety

CELA urges the Government of Canada to reintroduce legislation for the protection of First Nations drinking water that includes source water protection.

The previously introduced legislation, Bill C-61, was supported by many First Nations, environmental organizations, and provincial and territorial authorities as an effective, enforceable, and sovereignty-respecting solution to a public health crisis.

One of the key strengths of Bill C-61 was the emphasis on a multi-barrier approach to safe drinking water. The first and perhaps most important of these barriers is the protection of source water.

First Nations communities are as deserving of safe drinking water as any other community in the country, a point noted by Justice O'Connor in the Walkerton Inquiry.

To remove source water protection provisions would significantly decrease the legislation's effectiveness and directly contradict the federal government's commitment to including Indigenous authorities in environmental decision-making.

CELA calls on the government to reintroduce a Bill like C-61, in the form it was reported out of Committee, without changes.

Casework

Legal Challenge Against Ontario's Mining Act: CELA client Grassy Narrows First Nation recently served its application record in support of its constitutional challenge against the "free entry" claim registration system under Ontario's Mining Act. Under this system, approximately **10,000 mining claims** have been registered in Grassy Narrows territory without notice, consultation or consent of Grassy Narrows. No date has been set for the hearing of this application, but a case conference judge has directed that it will be heard together with a similar application commenced by other Indigenous communities.

Grave Concerns Over Proposed Nuclear Waste Repository: The NWMO's proposal to store 5.9 million bundles of high-level radioactive used nuclear fuel underground in northwestern Ontario raises concerns about adverse environmental and health impacts for local communities and communities along the transportation routes.

CELA's client, We the Nuclear Free North, recently provided comments to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada on the Summary of Issues. They are concerned that critical factors within the impact assessment framework were relegated to an annex as opposed to forming part of the Summary of Issues and that key issues raised in earlier submissions were improperly excluded.

The Deep Geological Repository has now been referred to a review panel. The next step will be the publication by the Agency of Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines. Learn more on CELA's [casework page](#).

Law Reform

A Call for Change: CELA, together with two Ontario residents from communities heavily impacted by industrial air pollution, filed a request under the *Environmental Bill of Rights* urging the provincial government to review and strengthen its policy on cumulative air pollution to ensure communities across the province are equally protected. A report summarizing the Application for Review can be found on our website.

'F' for Effort: CELA released a report calling on the Government of Ontario to make improvements to their nearly 20-year-old approach to protecting children from being exposed to lead in school drinking water.

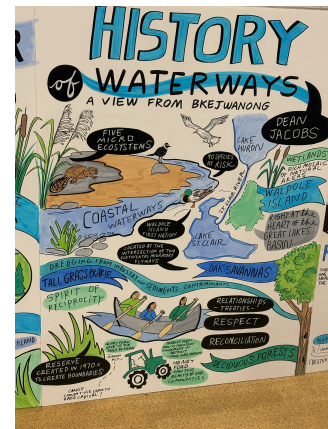
The report uses provincial data to show that, despite being one of the first provinces and territories to begin regulating lead in school drinking water in 2007, too many students continue to be exposed to lead today.

More Pollution and Less Transparency: CELA calls on the province to deny ArcelorMittal Dofasco's (AMD) application to renew its Environmental compliance Approval (ECA) for its Hamilton facility. Our core concerns are:

- AMD is currently violating provincial air quality standards for benzene, benzo(a)pyrene, manganese, manganese compounds and sulphur dioxide.
- AMD is relying on an open-ended abatement plan that CELA argues is not a valid substitute for complying with provincial air standards.
- The Ministry and AMD have failed to provide documentation for the renewal application, including an actual draft ECA.
- AMD's proposed timeline to transition to cleaner technology is stalled, with no clear timeline for completion despite significant public investment.
- The proposal does not address the cumulative burden of air pollution on Hamilton residents, who experience significant impacts.

Resources

Anti-Plastic Fantastic Decision: The Federal Court of Appeal recently reversed a Federal Court decision, upholding the listing of plastic manufactured items as toxic under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*. Read more in [this blog post](#) by CELA Counsel Joseph Castrilli.



Lighting of 8th Fire Conference: CELA staff were honoured to be invited to attend this 3-day conference in Aamjiwnaang First Nation. The theme was water, and brought together Traditional Knowledge, Western sciences and political leaders to discuss the importance of water.

River Run 2026: Walk with Grassy Narrows for Mercury Justice!
Walk with Grassy Narrows youth and community members to show that we are with them on their path to achieve mercury justice and freedom.

Date: September 23rd, 2026 at 12pm

Location: Downtown Toronto, exact location TBD

[Register here](#)

Apply for a Free Air Conditioner

The City of Toronto has expanded its Free Air Conditioner Program for the summer of 2026 to provide portable air conditioning units to income-eligible individuals in multi-residential buildings.

To qualify, applicants must be Toronto residents in a multi-unit building, lack access to in-suite cooling, and belong to a low-income household. Specific eligibility streams include seniors (age 65+ with a medical need) and pregnant individuals or parents/legal guardians of infants under one.

Applications are being accepted online, by phone at 416-397-2220, or via an in-person appointment, and eligible individuals will be selected through a randomized draw.

The application period is only open from Monday, April 7 to Monday, April 21, 2026.

More details can be found [on our website](#).

Need Legal Services?

If you have an environmental justice issue, we may be able to help.

We provide free, confidential legal help to people living on low income as well as vulnerable, under-resourced or Indigenous communities.

We also provide environmental justice legal advice to individuals and groups regardless of income.

[Click here to complete an intake form](#)

Complete an online intake form, call our office at 416-960-2284 or 1-844-755-1420 ext 7216, or email us at articling@cela.ca.

Support Our Work

The [Canadian Environmental Law Foundation](#) raises funds to support environmental research, education, and access-to-justice initiatives.

In addition, the Foundation works to preserve and make accessible the history of environmental law in Canada so that future generations can learn from the past. This includes our digital and physical library and archival holdings.

Your gift today will help mentor the next generation of environmental lawyers and sustain the research and education needed to ensure environmental law continues to evolve.

Support Our Work

From the Foundation

March Feature: This month's feature from the Canadian Environmental Law Archive is a 1976 report written by then CELA researcher (and now counsel) Joseph Castrilli. Titled "Corporate Concentration and the Environment", it recommends the passage of an Environmental Bill of Rights by the Federal government and each of the provincial governments to reduce the disparity of power and resources between the corporate sector and individuals, the public sector, and the government.

Forward to a Friend

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