



INTERVENOR

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health for over 50 years*

First Nations Clean Water Act: An Important Step Forward

Access to safe drinking water is a right - yet many First Nations communities across Canada continue to face boil water advisories and inadequate water infrastructure. The recently introduced [Bill C-37, the First Nations Clean Water Act](#), marks an important step toward addressing this long-standing crisis.

Bill C-37 follows a long legislative journey: its predecessor, Bill C-61, died on the order paper when Parliament was prorogued, and was reintroduced in amended form as C-37. CELA has concerns about how those amendments were made - changes to key provisions, including around First Nations' human right to water and source water protection zones, were not developed in consultation with First Nations communities. This is a problem that needs to be corrected. However, given the critical importance of this legislation, we believe the path forward is to address these concerns through the legislative process.

First Nations communities currently have limited legal tools to protect their water, making federal legislation all the more essential. CELA is continuing to review Bill C-37 in depth, and will be sharing additional resources and commentary soon.

Action Alert

Federal Proposal Would Cut Environmental Protection

On May 8th the government released a discussion paper proposing to significantly cut federal assessment, approval and permitting processes used to protect the environment and allow Canadians to participate in decisions on major and high-risk projects. The deadline for comments has been extended to July 22, 2026.

Tell the government that it should develop, with meaningful public and Indigenous consultation, reforms that actually strengthen – not rollback – environmental safeguards so that Canada’s people and ecosystems are strong and healthy in the future.

Take Action

Casework

Deep Geological Repository for Used Nuclear Fuel Waste: CELA represents the "We the Nuclear Free North" coalition in relation to the proposed Deep Geological Repository (DGR) in northwestern Ontario for the transportation and underground placement of high-level radioactive waste. The federal impact assessment process for this controversial and risk-laden project is currently underway, and CELA has made submissions on behalf of our client to ensure that the assessment process is robust, credible, and participatory.

In late June, however, the federal government announced its intention to designate this proposal as a national interest project under the *Building Canada Act* (BCA), which would effectively (and alarmingly) pre-approve the facility long before the impact assessment process has been completed, and before its significant adverse impacts have been rigorously identified and thoroughly evaluated. There will be a forthcoming opportunity for public and

Indigenous input on whether the BCA designation should be made for the DGR project.

Given the inherently dangerous and long-term nature of the environmental and human health risks posed by used nuclear fuel waste, our client strongly opposes the BCA designation because it is premature, unjustified, and contrary to the public interest for the federal government to fast-track the DGR project in this manner.

Grassy Narrows Applies to Appeal Provincial Approvals: In mid-June, CELA and co-counsel Cavalluzzo LLP filed reply submissions and expert evidence with the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) in support of Grassy Narrows First Nation's applications to appeal two provincial approvals for advanced exploration at the proposed Great Bear gold mine, located upstream of the Grassy Narrows community. Grassy Narrows is concerned that water takings and wastewater discharges authorized by the approvals could cause significant harm to the environment, human health, and treaty rights — including the formation of methylmercury, which bioaccumulates in fish and the people who eat them. The OLT is expected to release its decision on whether to grant leave to appeal in late July. Learn more on our [casework page](#).

Law Reform

Heat Waves: Extreme heat is a growing public health crisis - and tenants are among those most at risk. CELA recently joined the Toronto Heat Safety Coalition at a press conference urging strong protections for renters. We were encouraged by Toronto City Council's recent direction to staff to develop a draft maximum indoor temperature bylaw for rental units by summer 2027. As CELA's recent [blog *No Safe Haven*](#) highlights, the growing threat of wildfire smoke and poor air quality is only deepening this crisis - leaving tenants with nowhere safe to turn.

Mining Impacts: CELA submitted comments to the Minister of Energy and Mines on Ontario's updated critical minerals strategy, raising several concerns. The strategy fails to account for the environmental costs, socio-economic and cultural impacts, and financial liabilities that mining operations generate. It also overlooks the significant threat that mining in Ontario's Far North poses to peatlands — and the serious implications for climate change. CELA also called on the province to commit to meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities and to respect their right to free, prior and informed consent on whether and how mining projects proceed.

Ontario Proposes Burning Organic Materials as “Renewable” Energy:

The province is proposing to amend the *Environmental Protection Act* and renewable energy regulations in order to make it easier for Energy-from-Waste (EfW) facilities to incinerate organic materials in the municipal waste stream.

The province is advancing this new approach in order to "promote more investment in EfW facilities."

The proposal, posted to the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO), unpersuasively argues that burning organic materials is a form of “renewable energy.” In our view, however, organic materials are not garbage. Instead, they are valuable resources which should not be sent to landfills or incinerators.

CELA is reviewing the ERO posting and will post our submission on our website prior to the public comment deadline on July 20, 2026.

Resources

Grassy Narrows River Run Rally:

Walk with Grassy Narrows youth and community members to show that you are with them on their path to achieve mercury justice and freedom!

Hosted by Free Grassy, taking place September 23, 2026

This is a family-friendly event. Rain or shine!

Check out FreeGrassy.net for more details as the event approaches.

Grassy Narrows people are powerful leaders in the movement for Indigenous sovereignty and environmental justice. They have shown that together we can fight for justice against all odds and make real gains.

Regulating Brownfields in St. Catharines: CELA recently presented at a virtual community-led information session regarding a closed industrial facility in St. Catharines. The session provided information about brownfield legislation, site remediation, and recent municipal developments.

Impact Report: CELA's 2025 Impact Report highlights our work fighting for environmental justice for Ontario's most vulnerable communities. From contaminated drinking water to nuclear waste, air pollution to extreme heat, the environmental challenges facing low-income communities, vulnerable and under-resourced individuals, and Indigenous people across the province are serious - and growing. We're proud to share the progress made possible through the collective effort of our clients, partners, supporters, and staff.

Community Right-to-Know: The National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI) is Canada's primary public database on pollution releases and transfers from facilities to air, land, and water. Environment and Climate Change Canada is reviewing potential improvements to the NPRI, including better data access, expanding pollutant reporting, and environmental justice considerations. Environmental and health-based members of the NPRI Consultative Working Group recently completed several reports highlighting areas of the NPRI for further exploration. Find out more about pollution data for your community on Canada's NPRI website.

- NPRI Off-site Transfers: What the public wants to know
- Environmental Justice and the NPRI: The Principle of Environmental Justice under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, and The Right to a Healthy Environment under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*
- What's In Your Backyard: Newsletter on Community Right-to-Know and the National Pollutant Release Inventory: available in English and French

Need Legal Services?

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

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.

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.

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

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

June Feature: This month's feature from the Canadian Environmental Law Archive is a 1989 report titled "Getting Out of the Waste Management Business" by then CELA Counsel Steven Shrybman.

Forward to a Friend

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