

Proposed Ontario Chamber of Commerce Policy for debate at the 2005 Ontario Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting in Sarnia, April 2005

Provincial Environmental Assessment Process: Consultation & Collaboration

Industrial projects in Ontario have traditionally been subject to environmental assessment legislation under both the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act*. This has been extremely burdensome to business, particularly in light of the need for market responsiveness and the opportunity cost of unforeseen delays in project implementation. Applicants have experienced difficulty in navigating the regulations and often feel that there are no clear guidelines provided and no consultation process to clarify the issues.

The Timmins Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of environmental protection and commends Canada's Minister of the Environment, and Ontario's Environment Minister for their recently signed agreement to work toward environmental assessment cooperation, which would improve the process and make it generally more efficient. However, we believe that specific steps must be taken immediately to ensure standardization of information, information transfer and a better understanding of the process by industry.

Recommendations

That the provincial government:

- 1) Implement a more defined consultation procedure, within the EA process, preferably face-to-face, with the aim of bringing the parties and the proponent (e.g. industry) together well before the EA process begins. This would facilitate discussion of firm timelines, information transfer and other requirements that the proponent may not be aware of, but which could change their anticipated schedule for project implementation.
- 2) Introduce a "lessons learned" section on the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's website to highlight EA related issues that have come up in past projects, thereby enabling proponents to look at some of the potential issues that they may encounter in their own projects.
- 3) Establish a mechanism or process for better communication and co-operation between Federal and Provincial government agencies, by naming a single lead agency (in each instance) to facilitate the process and ensure efficient transfer of information. This would target reduction in duplication of certain EA requirements, and create greater efficiency in dealing with issues that arise in the EA process.
- 4) Set a target that proponents be notified of reasons for variance from timelines within 30 days.
- 5) Ensure that 80% of all harmonized reviews meet the timelines as set out by the province.

SUBMITTED BY THE TIMMINS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE