



May 23, 2019

Attention: Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Regarding: The proposal to modernize Ontario's Environmental Assessment Program

Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO) is a not for profit organization that has been representing the resource-based tourism industry in Ontario since 1929. This industry depends on a vibrant wilderness environment including, lakes, rivers, forests, and wildlife. Ensuring that Ontario's Environmental Assessment Program is focused on supporting these objectives is important to our industry.

We therefore support the proposed amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act that if passed will:

- **Modernize the environmental assessment program to immediately exempt low-risk projects.**

The resource-based tourism industry is well positioned for further growth which would encourage hundreds of thousands of additional visitors from all over the world to come to Ontario to experience our natural beauty. New visitors bring new needs and could cause upgrades of accommodations and facilities for our lodges and resorts in Northern Ontario.

It is important that the EA processes support this growth by ensuring reasonable timelines and certainty for business operators. Exempting low risk activities from the EA process as outlined in the discussion paper will help to ensure that other larger and more complex projects get the response times they need to proceed with development.

NOTO would be interested in hearing more about the criteria for risk assessments.

- **Ensure timelines and certainty for the review of requests to the Minister asking for a higher level of assessment on a project (i.e. bump-up) by;**
 1. *Clearly defining which matters bump-ups can be requested on, including matters related to Aboriginal or treaty rights and other matters of provincial importance as prescribed.*
 2. *Authorizing the creation of a regulation that would prescribe limits on when the Minister must make decisions on requests, and deadlines for requesting bump-up to provide transparency for all involved in the process.*
 3. *Ensuring that Ontarians are given priority over other interests by limiting bump-up requests to only those that live in Ontario.*

Concern: #3: We DO NOT SUPPORT non-resident tourism business owners who invest and contribute significantly to Ontario to be excluded from requesting a bump-up.

- **Clarify the Minister's authority to reconsider an approval of a project and ask for additional information on an individual environmental assessment, if deemed appropriate.**

While we do support these parts of the proposal, we cannot support any changes that see declaration orders usurping a proper Environmental Assessment process for projects that include Crown Lands or any other type of public lands. We request that the EA process remain in place for projects like forestry and mining on Crown Lands. With the size and scope of those projects it is imperative that a comprehensive assessment process be made available. We must ensure any negative impacts on the environment be carefully reviewed outside the forest management process.

Additional Recommendations:

- Understanding the new stresses on our natural environment like climate change, we urge this Government to build in considerations for climate change in all processes of an environmental assessment under this Act.
- We echo the recommendation brought forward by TIAO to retain the "Terms of Reference" (TOR) mechanism under the EAA, while revising (or removing) the current Ministerial power to approve "focused" TORs which exclude key environmental planning considerations (e.g., "need", "alternatives to", and alternate sites).

Overall, we support a reduction in duplicative, redundant and time-consuming processes that currently plague the current Act. We also support a more streamlined approach to environmental assessments. However, after reading through the Discussion Paper provided, we do have concerns.

We are concerned that opportunities will be eliminated for tourism businesses to have comprehensive assessments of potential negative environmental impacts on specific lakes, rivers, wildlife species, fisheries and their habitat that support a strong and vibrant outdoor tourism industry. We believe that tourism businesses or individuals who have concerns after going through an entire forest management planning process, should have another mechanism to do a check and balance on behalf of the environment through an environmental assessment process. Our environment is too important to dismiss.

We look forward to continuing to assist this Government as they move forward with their efforts to reduce red tape for the tourism industry.

Yours in Tourism,



Laurie Marcil
Executive Director