

January 25, 2022

EA Modernization Project Team
Environmental Assessment Modernization Branch
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Re: 019-4219 - Moving to a project list approach under the Environmental Assessment Act

On behalf of the Ontario Waste Management Association (OWMA), I am pleased to provide comments regarding the proposed project list for comprehensive environmental assessments. In principle, OWMA supports the approach to allow some projects to follow a streamlined approval process with only designated projects subject to comprehensive environmental assessments.

As noted by OWMA's previous May 21, 2019, submission (ERO 013-5102), the new project-list approach will enable focus on projects with higher risks of environmental impact and is likely to reduce the number of projects subject to a comprehensive environmental assessment. Taking this approach will better align Ontario with other jurisdictions across Canada, who use project lists to determine the types of projects that must complete an EA. The shift to a Comprehensive EA Project List would ensure environmental safeguards are in place while setting thresholds for lower risk projects to adhere to a streamlined process in key sectors such as waste management.

For waste management sector projects that are clearly in the public interest, there is a need to update existing lists and thresholds for projects on the list. Appropriate consideration should be given to expansion projects that meet more reasonable size thresholds for being incorporated into a more streamlined process. Currently, the ministry is proposing to maintain the existing proposed thresholds for waste management projects that require a comprehensive environmental assessment, and specific exceptions or exemptions that are covered by O. Reg. 101/07, are also being incorporated into the proposed project list.

We recommend the following:

- Under section 23 & 25, a comprehensive EA should be required for landfill projects that increase the total waste disposal volume by more than 375,000 cubic metres, or 25% if the change would increase the total waste disposal volume by more than 375,000 cubic metres.

Applying a 25% volume increase threshold for volume increases above 375,000 cubic metres is more reasonable and would allow more of Ontario's larger public and private landfill sites (that currently manage about 70% of Ontario's waste disposal) to follow a streamlined process for adding necessary waste capacity and aid in Ontario's economic recovery. Environmental safeguards would be in place since these sites have already been subject to a comprehensive environmental assessment in their establishment.

Small expansions of waste sites are generally accompanied by already well-understood knowledge of any potential impacts. For example, a 500,000m³ expansion at a 2,000,000m³ site presents a very low risk to the environment, and has a very low magnitude as to its overall impacts due to the environmental safeguards put in place at the time of the landfill's original establishment. The introduction of percentage thresholds for expansions above 375,000 cubic metres that would trigger a comprehensive environmental assessment (a threshold that would trigger a comprehensive EA for the example noted above) better reflect the low risk of small expansions to large, existing sites, than the currently proposed thresholds.

Sincerely,



Mike Chopowick
Chief Executive Officer