

Environmental Assessment Office Policy

Public Comments

This contains the EAO policy respecting the treatment of submissions received from the public in response to an invitation to provide comments regarding

- the proposed Terms of Reference for the development of an Application for an environmental assessment certificate, or
- the Application itself.

BACKGROUND

Public consultation during an environmental assessment (EA) contributes to the gathering and sharing of all relevant information related to the potential effects of a proposed project. This may include not only environmental effects, but also economic, social, heritage and health effects, where these arise.

A key part of the EA process is to seek public input respecting a proposed project. This ensures that public concerns relevant to the assessment are identified so they may be examined and addressed where required. This input is also important because it contributes to the preparation by all affected parties in managing the predicted impacts of a project and to the overall understanding of the project by the public.

POLICY

For the purposes of interpreting and applying this policy, “submission” refers to any written or electronic form of communication sent to the EAO in connection with a project that is being reviewed. (A submission is not considered to include an enquiry either about the EA process in general or about the status of the assessment for a specific project.)

Limits on Submissions

Timing

Submissions must be made within the time limits established in the invitation to comment. Submissions received after the closing date will be reviewed by the Project Lead and filed. However, these will not ordinarily be considered part of the EA process and, thus, will not be posted to ePIC or provided to the Proponent.

Identification

Submissions must include the name of the author(s) and a postal address, email address or phone number. This will permit authenticity to be verified where required.

Suitable Language

Submissions must be made in language that is appropriate for publication. A submission using profane or offensive language, or which is defamatory to one or more individuals or

organizations, may be edited or may be withheld from publication in the discretion of the Project Lead.

Handling of Submissions

Submissions received prior to the expiry of a formal public comment period will be posted to the EAO's electronic Project Information Centre ('ePIC') website. This posting constitutes acknowledgment of receipt of the submission and no further communication back to the author will necessarily be made by the EAO.

Where the author of a submission requests that his or her identity be withheld, the submission will not be posted to ePIC. However, where the Project Lead determines that the comments raise a substantive new issue, the comments will become part of the assessment and the Proponent will be required to include them as comments without attribution in the issues tracking sheet.

Submissions that include identification of a private third party will not be posted and will not be included in the assessment process unless the consent of that third party has been included.

To conform with copyright laws, written material published elsewhere which is incorporated in or attached to a submission will only be posted if:

- explicit permission is given by the author or publisher of a newspaper or magazine article, report or scientific study; or
- publishers have not prohibited the use of the material, only a brief description of the published material is provided, and either
 - an Internet link to the full material is included, or
 - the material is properly cited by providing the author's full name, title of the piece, name of the originating publication, and date of publishing.

Submissions that are identical or nearly identical to other submissions already posted to ePIC may not be posted if new information is not provided. This will permit more efficient use of the website and reduce the potential for confusion.

Submissions that are received in the form of a petition will be posted to ePIC where signatories have indicated a willingness to have their personal information disclosed. In the absence of consent to such disclosure, only the text of the petition will be posted to ePIC.

Consideration given to Submissions

All submissions received prior to the deadline for receipt of submissions will be considered. EAO encourages submissions that identify an issue or concern or otherwise contribute to a better understanding of the potential effects of a project, rather than merely adopting a position for or against a project.