



CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION  
*L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DU DROIT DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT*



ENVIRONMENTAL | DEFENCE

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Environmental groups applaud Third Reading of Clean Water Act**

*Hopeful that quick implementation will help prevent another Walkerton*

**Toronto, Ontario** – Six years after the tragedy at Walkerton and four years after the Report of the Walkerton Inquiry, the long-anticipated *Clean Water Act* is about to become a reality. The *Act* passed Third Reading today. The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) and Environmental Defence applaud the Ontario legislature for its continued commitment to this critical piece of legislation.

“Today is a good day for source water protection in Ontario. This law is a great first step toward protecting Ontario’s drinking water. Now that we have legislation in place, we need to make real improvements happen on the ground,” said Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director of Environmental Defence.

The *Clean Water Act* is designed to protect existing and future sources of drinking water from contamination or depletion. It lays out a formal process for identifying threats to the sources of our drinking water, and establishes local committees to address those threats. While the goal of drinking water source protection has received nearly universal support, the effective implementation of the *Act* will depend in large part on the detailed regulations which have yet to be publicly released.

Earlier this summer, 16 environmental and citizens’ groups released a joint statement supporting the *Act* and recommending ways in which it should be strengthened to ensure the best possible protection. Their recommendations included:

- adoption of the precautionary principle;
- extensive and ongoing public participation and education;
- strong commitments to the Great Lakes and integration with Great Lakes agreements; and,
- sustainable funding for the program’s implementation.

“There is concern that the government hasn’t addressed many recommendations made by these environmental and citizens’ groups,” said Jessica Ginsburg, counsel with CELA. “The *Clean Water Act* is a wonderful starting point, but several of our key concerns have been deferred until

the regulations are passed. Essentially, we're being asked to take a leap of faith that the regulations will provide for the meaningful implementation of source water protection."

"A critical test will be how well the new law works to protect our Great Lakes, a source of 80% of Ontario's drinking water, and whether or not adequate funding is provided to implement the source water protection plans," said Dr. Smith.

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