

Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association



**OSWCA Submission to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation
and Parks – New regulation to focus municipal environmental
assessment requirements ERO 019-7891**

March 2024



March 8, 2024

EA Modernization Project Team
Environmental Assessment Modernization Branch
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
135 St Clair Avenue West, 4th Floor.
Toronto, ON M4V 1P5

Re: New regulation to focus municipal environmental assessment requirements

The OSWCA represents over 800 member companies across the province. Our members construct, rehabilitate, and supply materials for water and wastewater systems throughout Ontario's 444 municipalities. This work is critical for the delivery of clean drinking water and maintenance of proper sanitation systems.

OSWCA has been involved with the MECP and other stakeholder organizations in promoting sensible, practical changes that would reduce delays on municipal infrastructure projects. OSWCA commends the EA Modernization Project Team for engaging in consultation on evaluating EA Act requirements for municipal infrastructure projects in 2023. There was strong support from the construction sector for taking any steps that would reduce redundancies and maintaining and expedite project delivery.

OSWCA supports for the proposed regulation outlined in Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) number 019-7891, which seeks to refine municipal environmental assessment requirements. This regulation presents a crucial step forward in promoting environmental stewardship while facilitating responsible municipal planning.

Environmental assessments are indispensable tools for evaluating the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects and developments. By ensuring that municipalities adhere to clear and focused assessment requirements, this regulation not only streamlines administrative processes but also enhances transparency and accountability in decision-making.

One of the most commendable aspects of the proposed regulation is its emphasis on aligning municipal environmental assessments with provincial priorities and objectives of building more homes. By providing municipalities with a clear framework and standardized criteria, the regulation enables them to assess projects in a manner that is consistent with broader environmental goals and policies. This coherence is essential for fostering a unified approach to environmental protection and sustainable development across the province.

A project list approach considered in ERO 019-7891 for municipal project assessments offers several advantages that contribute to more efficient and effective decision-making and environmental protection.

A project list approach provides clear guidance to project proponents and regulatory agencies on which types of projects require environmental assessment. This clarity helps streamline the assessment process by eliminating the current ambiguity and ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately.



By focusing on projects that are likely to have significant environmental impacts, a project list approach allows regulatory agencies to prioritize their efforts and resources where they are most needed. This proactive approach to risk management helps ensure that environmental concerns are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

A project list approach can help streamline the environmental assessment process by reducing the need for case-by-case determinations of whether an assessment is required. This can lead to faster decision-making and reduced administrative burden for both regulators and project proponents.

A project list approach promotes consistency in decision-making by applying standardized criteria to determine which projects require environmental assessment. This helps ensure that similar projects are treated similarly, regardless of their location or the specific regulatory authority involved.

By establishing a clear and publicly available list of projects subject to environmental assessment, a project list approach enhances transparency and accountability in the decision-making process. This allows stakeholders to better understand which projects are being evaluated and to participate more effectively in the assessment process.

A project list approach allows regulatory agencies to allocate their limited resources more effectively by focusing on projects with the greatest potential for environmental impact. This helps ensure that assessments are conducted where they are most needed, maximizing the environmental benefits of the process.

Overall, a project list approach offers a systematic and efficient way to identify and prioritize projects for environmental assessment, helping to protect the environment while minimizing regulatory burden and promoting sustainable development.

In addition to promoting efficiency, the proposed regulation also underscores the importance of public engagement and consultation in the environmental assessment process. By providing opportunities for meaningful input from stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, environmental organizations, and residents, municipalities can ensure that decisions reflect the diverse perspectives and interests of the people they serve. This inclusivity is essential for building trust, fostering collaboration, and promoting social license for proposed projects and developments.

In conclusion, OSWCA urges the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks to proceed with the adoption of ERO 019-7891 and to continue working collaboratively with the sewer and watermain construction industry, municipalities, and the public to refine and implement these important regulatory changes. By focusing municipal environmental assessment requirements, Ontario can promote sustainable development while building resilient communities for future generations.

OSWCA appreciates having the opportunity to provide input into this consultation process. By reviewing and addressing these concerns and recommendations, the MECP would be ensuring the proper adoption of rules based on the intent of this regulation and would be helping to clarify some of the ongoing uncertainty.



Please do not hesitate to contact us (905-629-7766 or steven.crombie@oswca.org) if you have any questions or need information regarding OSWCA and its membership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick McManus".

Patrick McManus
Executive Director
Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association

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