

## Media Release

### CELA Applauds Government's Anti-SLAPP Bill

**December 1, 2014**

The Canadian Environmental Law Association applauded the introduction of a Bill to address strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) in Ontario. “The bill will protect Ontarians from the chilling impact that SLAPPs have on people publicly voicing their concerns on matters of public interest,” said Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association. “Anti-SLAPP legislation will strengthen the democratic process.”

SLAPPs are meritless lawsuits which are intended to prevent individuals from engaging in public debate in matters of public interest by burdening them with substantial legal costs, thereby forcing them to abandon their opposition and silencing criticism. The Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel, which was established in 2010 to provide advice to the government on the content of legislation to address SLAPPs, noted that “the threat of lawsuits for speaking out on matters of public interest, combined with a number of actual lawsuits, deter significant numbers of people from participating in discussions of such matters.”

The enactment of Anti-SLAPP legislation has received wide support from individuals and organizations in Ontario, including the Canadian Bar Association, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, academics and numerous non-governmental organizations.

“The Bill provides an effective and expeditious mechanism to allow for early dismissal of these types of lawsuits so that individuals who have been the target of a SLAPP do not have to incur unnecessary legal expenses,” said Ramani Nadarajah, counsel with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. “The Bill will also ensure that frivolous lawsuits do not impose an unwarranted burden on our courts’ limited resources.”

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