

Environmental impact assessment of canada

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



According to “ Universitytoday”, the earth is only covered by 29% of land and 71% of water. Even within the 29% of land, there are still proportions of it being uninhabitable for humans. When using the inhabitable land, we will certainly impact the environment around us, and so it is a common knowledge to assess the impact of our actions and try to make it as little as possible. Starting by the US in the 1960s, Canada was one of the first countries as the second largest country in the world, it is important to know how we are protecting Canada’s precious environment and land, and the process of assessing the environmental impacts we are taking. In terms of the environmental assessment policies, the Environmental Assessment Act (EAA) is the backbone of the environmental assessment process, the EAA regulates the usage of land to better protect, and conserve as much as possible. The process of taking EAA to action is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Definition of the environment, usually means (a) the air, water, and land in or on which people, animals, and plants live and (b) the conditions that you live or work in and the way that they influence how you feel or how effectively you can work.

Scope of EIA application

In Ontario, the environmental assessment act (EAA) is different from the environmental protection act and the Ontario water resource act. Its purpose is to “ protect, conserve, and wisely manage Ontario’s environment”. It is really a planning document, it promotes responsible environmental decision making, and it sets out a planning and decision-making process to ensure the environmental effects of a project are evaluated and documented prior to decisions made about construction. The other two then look into the

details of how things will be done. For example, if we ever need to build a landfill, first the project is proposed, the EAA take into process to think and decide where the landfill will go to. The EPA will kick in once we decided where the landfill will go, then it will process the questions such as how big it's going to be, how are we going to design it, how are we going to deal with odour, leaking, the EPAs are technical documents, they deal with the nuts and bolts about how things are going to be operated. They must not only assess the potential environmental effect, but also must consider alternatives to the proposed plan, including a do-nothing alternative. The do-nothing alternative is for the company to estimate, if the proposal did not pass, what the consequence may be. For example, when proposing for a landfill, it is aimed to have a place to dump all the garbage inside. If the proposal did not pass, then the company might say garbage is going to be piled up, diseases might spread around, reasons to justify their claim to operate the project.

When City of Kitchener was looking at the alternatives of a landfill, they started the idea of systematically recycle the garbage, it was the origin of Blue Box, and this because a huge success, the world's first curbside recycling program became official in Kitchener in 1981. Since then, the Blue Box has become a symbol for recycling programs in more than 150 countries around the world and has received awards from the Canadian government for its contribution. EAA will have a lot of public consultation while making the decision, it will ensure that the interested person will be given an opportunity to speak about their opinion on the project that may affect them. I believe it makes sense, because take an example, if a landfill was planned

a couple of kilometres from my property, I will be concerned about a lot of things, such as whether I will be impacted by track traffic, and maybe whether there will be an odour strong enough to affect my daily life. I would certainly want to have a say in how that project is going to be operated. Due to the same reason as that, the aboriginal people have to be consulted if the project is near them. Their concern needs to be addressed and they need to be informed.

Difference in Private and Public Sectors

EAA is usually subjected to mainly government projects. Government (provincial, municipal and Crown corporations) projects that cost more than \$3.5 million (1972), usually this includes highways, waste-management projects, water/flood protection works etc. It is important to note that the \$3.5 million is actually in 1972 dollars, so which means there will be government employed accounts who are needed to calculate how much the project will cost if it's in 1972 money. No inflation is accounted. Due to the fact that the EAA is only subjected to government projects, and nowadays, a lot of private corporations are doing projects in the same scale, but they are not automatically subjected to the EAA, they will have to be designated by regulations or the private corporation can do an EAA voluntarily.

An example of the EAA designation is the Melancthon mega-quarry project. It was an open-pit limestone quarry that was proposed by The Highland Companies, it was planned to be located in Dufferin and Melancthon Township, the quarry was planned to be as big as 937 hectares and it would have a pump 600 million litres of water per day, the quarry was proposed to

hole deeper than Niagara Falls. Based on the research Highland has commissioned, the quarry “ simply can’t have a negative environmental impact, ” says company spokesperson Lindsay Broadhead. But the local resident was not convinced. People planned protests gathering more than 30, 000 people in October 2011 wishing for the company to withdraw its plans. Due to quarry activities were not covered by EAA automatically, the ministry designated the Highland Companies to complete one automatically. Fortunately, due to enough public pressure, the proponent withdrew the application for the EAA. A worth mentioning point is that the Ministry did not turn down the project, but the companies withdraw due to public concerns. It was quoted from David Suzuki himself, that “ Rules governing aggregate mining in the province are weak, provide little protection against large projects and too often sacrifice prime agricultural land and nature to industry”.

Methods and Framework

Start with proponent meeting with the public and deciding what their concerns are and how they are going about their project. In the case of a landfill, the company will look for land with a clay base and avoid farmland if possible. The public would express their concern and give their side of input. Then the terms of reference (ToR) is written up, in the ToR the proponent will summarize the prime areas of consideration of their land choice. ToR is submitted to the government, they look at it and determine if they are happy about it. Once the minister approves the ToR, the company can start sighting for the land. During the process the public is informed so they know what the proponent is doing. After the sighting is completed, the environmental

assessment is submitted to the government and the government go through its own review. Different ministries will look at the report, and a recommendation will go to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The minister will either approve it without a hearing or send it to a hearing. Another option is the minister will send it to negotiation, the two parts will negotiate what should be changed in the ToR, and then the minister can make the decision again. There are two types of EA's, it has been divided by individual EA, which applies to one individual project, and the class/streamline EA, which refers to some of the routine projects. Such as the extension of highways or building new station of the TTC subway.

Positives and Negatives of Ontario EIAs

Hunt, C. D. (1990) did a comparison research between the Environmental Impact Assessment system between the US and Canada, he concluded that the EIA experience in both countries has underlined the importance of citizen involvement in EIA. This suggests that the process revolving around public opinions does help in the system moving forward, and at his time, he also predicts that the public will continue to play a bigger role in the future. Our latest version of the EAA was modified in 2012, and we have been using it since. Although Dr Hunt has high hopes of the latest EAA, activists claimed otherwise. Gage, A. (2012) mentioned in the West Coast Environmental Law that the proposed amendments have changed the public consultation window, to only those who are “ directly affected. ” In other words, this means the EAA will now only communicate with the special interest group. For instance, a person living in the nearest community of a power plant, who is concerned about the impacts of the plant on groundwater and wildlife,

may be turned away since the Environmental Appeal Board will rule this person out since he/she had not proven that he/she was “ directly affected” and will not hear her appeal. I believe this is not the right direction for the EAA to go.

I do believe that listening to every interest group’s opinion might dilute the original purpose of the project and might shift the focus of such projects. But it is more concerning that now the Board will narrow down the path for public group’s voice to be heard, and such crackdown on the public group size will surely defeat the purpose of the public participation in the EAA in the first place. It is the voice of the people that need to be heard, it is their interest which should be addressed. If anyone with actual interest wanted to participate in the discussion and EAA process, then they should be allowed to come in and speak out. Another not successful point of the jurisdiction’s approach to EIA is that, if the project was owned by the municipalities, it is not forced to go through an EA, even if it is in the applicable size. It is all by voluntary, which to my opinions, should propose a change in the EAA act, so that projects owned by corporations should also automatically be subjected to an EAA if it reaches certain size. And on the other hand, if the project did not reach the \$3. 5-million threshold, then it would be excluded from needing an EAA.

A project costing less should not simply be justified for the reason of it to be exempted. Everybody knows that even a small action can have a huge effect on the environment, the limit should be lowered, and the category of a project needing EAA should also be more specific so it can limit the chance of

privately operated, below threshold projects slip through the system and bring potential threats to the natural environment.

Recent Changes to Policy

From the Environmental Canada (2018), on Feb 8th, 2018, the minister of environment and Climate Change tabled Bill C-69, which is proposed to repeal the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 and replace with the Impact Assessment Act. In the new act, routine activities will no longer need an individual review, it will now be a permit by rule system which now has a standard series of rules. For example, if a person only wants to open a coffee shop, they find out they meet the series of rules, then they can directly get an approval, instead of waiting for a long processing time. This change now gives more power to the ministry provincial officer, they can now order the company to operate in certain ways, and they can give out penalty tickets on site. Also, there will be simpler standard rules that apply to all the same services. In the past, for a complicated, multistep project, the company may have multiple approvals, which could be approved at different times under different law, they may contradict each other and make things complicated. With this change to the EAA, one site can have one single environmental compliance approval, that is inner consistent, and has all the rules a project need to follow.

To conclude, the Canadian environmental impact assessment and environmental assessment act have been through changes, some are positive, and some aren't meeting the expectations. But the system is

steadily going in the right direction and I believe in the future, all human activities can be correctly accessed and preserve out great environment.