

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



Environmental assessment (EA) is a tool used to identify, predict and evaluate potential effects of a proposed project on the environment as well as impacts on society, economics, and culture, allowing governments to strike a balance between economic development and environmental protection.

### What are the issues?

- Changes to its environmental assessment legislation without providing opportunities for comment by the public.

In July 2019, the Ontario government tabled [Bill 197, COVID-197 Economic Recovery Act, 2020](#), an omnibus bill which used economic recovery to make [changes to the province's environmental assessment legislation](#), including Environmental Assessment Act (EAA). Bill 197, ultimately adopted, was fast-tracked. The Auditor General of Ontario ruled that this was not compliant with the legislative process by [not allowing for public consultation on Bill 197](#).

In the Fall of 2021, Bill 197 was followed with added legislation, [Bill 13, Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021](#) and subsequent [regulations](#), proposed November 2021, listing those areas subject to EA. Many public infrastructure projects that would have undergone [environmental assessment no longer will](#). The changes also mean that public input into environmental assessment of projects is reduced. Aspects of projects in the areas of forestry management, highway planning and construction, expansion of sewage treatment plants, hydro, mining projects and projects in parks and conservation areas could be exempted from assessment.

- The provincial government has reduced [the role of conservation authorities](#).
- It is also using [Ministerial Zoning Orders \(MZOs\)](#) to fast-track development on farmland and in natural areas including greenbelt lands.

### Why now?

Changes to environmental assessment, along with changes to the powers carried by conservation authorities, the extreme use of the [Ministerial Zoning Orders \(MZOs\)](#), and [changes to the provincial Species At Risk Act](#) cumulatively, have significantly eroded environmental protections in the province, while focusing on development. Any further erosion to the provinces environmental protections could lead to both [developers and communities not being assured of a level playing field](#), as well as leaving little protection for species and the environment.

### Resources

- <https://ecojustice.ca/ontario-proposes-sweeping-changes-to-environmental-assessment/>
- [https://ontarionature.org/campaigns/mzos/;](https://ontarionature.org/campaigns/mzos/)
- <https://ontarionature.org/vote-for-nature-blog/>
- <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/main-news/changes-ontario-s-endangered-species-act-increases-risk-extinction-utm-researchers-find;>
- <https://environmentaldefence.ca/campaign/protecting-ontarios-environment/>

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### Key Message

Changes to the province's environmental assessment legislation, along with changes to other provincial environmental legislation have removed critical protections for the environment while allowing developers to circumvent environmental protections.

### Questions For Candidates

1. How will your party ensure environmental protection is reasonably balanced with development?
2. Will your party aim to reverse the changes to environment-related legislation in Ontario to provide greater protections for species and the environment?
3. How will your party ensure that public participation is restored in the environmental assessment process?
4. Will your party strengthen the role of conservation authorities in environmental protection?