

News Release: **Environmental Group critiques Environment Act review**

Sept. 7, 2011

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The Ecology Action Centre is calling for more transparency in the government's review of the Nova Scotia Environment Act. Every 5 years, the legislation that protects air, water and land in the province - must be reviewed. This summer, the Dept of Environment released a discussion paper with changes it proposed to the Environment Act. Proposed changes were mostly administrative but EAC says the reasons for the proposed changes need to be clarified. "More effective administration is always a good goal, but protecting the environment should still be the Department's priority," said Fred Wendt, water coordinator at the environmental organization. "And the scope of their review is too narrow. For example, EAC would like to see a number of changes, including allowing strategic environmental assessments to assess the potential impact of activities like hydraulic fracturing or fracking in Nova Scotia," he said.

The deadline for submissions was September 6. Public submissions will then be reviewed by an advisory panel, self-selected from the province's Round Table on the Environment, a group that advises government on environmental matters. EAC's policy director Mark Butler would be eligible to participate on that panel but has chosen not to. "This selection process is seriously flawed. There are lots of experts outside the Round Table membership whose contributions will now be ignored," Butler said.

Ecology Action Centre sent in its submission on the Environment Act review this week. "We have been collaborating with other environmental groups and we see some common themes," Wendt said. These include greater opportunity for the public to comment on the review of the act, public notification before toxic materials are applied to or released on commercial properties, retaining the mandatory 5-year review requirement, and maintaining a precautionary approach to environmental approvals, rather than only relying on enforcement of problems after they occur, he said. The Centre's submission can be reviewed on its website, www.ecologyaction.ca