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For immediate release

Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy and Environmental Commissioner consistent in criticising provincial governments handling of Great Lakes Agreement, Genetically Modified Food issues and Managing Hazardous Waste

CIELAP Executive Director Anne Mitchell stated in response to the release of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's Annual Report that "the ECO has provided a valuable public service, in highlighting the highhanded manner in which many Ontario government agencies and Ministries dismiss the complaints and concerns of Ontario citizens concerned about environmental protection.

Mitchell went on to say " we are particularly pleased that the ECO highlighted the failure of the Ontario Government in several key areas:

- The failure to sign the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem (COA) designed to clean up the Great Lakes. CIELAP concurs with the ECO that a new agreement with clear timelines and objectives are needed. CIELAP believes the COA should be signed and initiated immediately.
- The Ministry of Environment (MOE) denied a CIELAP application for the review of hazardous waste management by the MOE. CIELAP is considering how to respond to the MOE's actions in light of the ECO's reporting, which highlights the MOE's shortcomings in handling this issue.
- The provincial government has not adequately dealt with Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and the risks to the ecosystem. CIELAP is concerned by the advocacy role of the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Agriculture with respect to promoting biotechnology research and related initiatives. The appointment of a provincial advocate with sufficient independence is supported by CIELAP as a move in the correct direction.

The ECO's report is a useful analysis. We are hopeful his office will go beyond recommendations and he will be able to affect change, particularly in the area of hazardous waste management which is a serious health risk."

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The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy has for been commenting on and monitoring policy and regulatory changes related to the environment for 30 years.