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For immediate release

Province Rejects Hazardous Waste Review

TORONTO, Ontario, April 28, 1998 -- The Ontario Ministry of the Environment has turned down a request by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) for a review of the province's laws, policies and regulations controlling the management of hazardous wastes.

The request was filed under the province's Environmental Bill of Rights on February 18, 1998. The request was based on the findings of the Institute's report Hazardous Waste Management in Ontario: A Report and Recommendations. Under the Environmental Bill of Rights the provincial government had 60 days to respond to the request.

"We are disappointed, but not surprised, at the government's response to our request. We had hoped that the Ministry would have recognized the extent of the problems in this area, and accepted the need for urgent action to address them" said Isobel Heathcote, the Institute's President.

"The government's failure to act in this regard is, sadly, consistent with its responses to evidence of other serious environmental problems facing the province," added Anne Mitchell, the Executive Director of the Institute.

The Institute's report, based on more than a year of research, found that the province lacked basic pieces of information about the generation and fate of wastes in the province, including a reliable estimate of the amounts of hazardous wastes in the province. The report also highlighted serious problems related to the disposal of hazardous wastes in municipal sewer systems, and with respect to hazardous waste 'recycling' facilities. The report made more than fifty recommendations for reform by the province to address these and other issues.

"The government's response means that the serious gaps in the framework of laws and institutions that is supposed to protect the safety, health and environment of Ontarian's will remain unaddressed," concluded Mark Winfield, the Institute's Director of Research, and author of the report.

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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.