
Report 4—Environmental Petitions Annual Report

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Focus of the annual report

The purpose of this annual report is to inform Parliament and Canadians about the number, nature, and status of petitions and responses received between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, as required by section 23 of the Auditor General Act.

In this report, we have also chosen to highlight the activities surrounding four past environmental petitions. We provide case studies to illustrate instances in which the government has addressed the issues raised by petitioners in these petitions and taken action.

Petitions and Responses

Petitions received

Petitions addressed a wide variety of issues, including ecological integrity, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustainable development goals, nuclear waste disposal and management, and environmental assessments of projects. Three petitions (405, 411, and 413) and one follow-up petition (405B) concerned cleaning up and preventing radioactive pollution from the nuclear industry in Canada and the environmental assessment regime for nuclear projects and facilities.

Departmental and agency performance and responses

This reporting year, departments and agencies provided responses to 19 petitions, 13 of which had been submitted in the previous reporting period. All the petition responses were provided within the 120-day statutory deadline except for one department's petition response, which was 6 days late.

Improving the environmental petitions process

The fall 2017 Environmental Petitions Annual Report and Retrospective identified four key areas of the petitions process that we could enhance. This year we took action in these four areas, as follows:

- Communicating the petitions process to Canadians
- Improving how we help Canadians
- Improving how we help federal organizations
- Finding ways to incorporate petitions into our audit work

Case studies

Nuclear operator liabilities

Petition 60A—Raised concerns that the level of required insurance coverage under the Nuclear Liability Act was not enough to adequately address the environmental and human health risks of nuclear facilities.

Expansion of boundaries for the proposed Lancaster Sound National Marine Conservation Area

Petition 348—Raised concerns that the proposed Lancaster Sound National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA), now known as the Tallurutiup Imanga NMCA, did not include the entire migration route for beluga whales to their summer breeding area in Cunningham Inlet.

Manolis L oil spill cleanup

Petition 373—Raised concerns about federal measures to mitigate damage and clean up oil leaking from the 1985 shipwreck of the Manolis L and about the lack of access to the Ship-source Oil Pollution Fund.

Canada's progress on implementing and reporting on Agenda 2030

Petition 410—The petition sought responses from 17 federal departments and agencies on Canada's progress in meeting the sustainable development goals and associated targets outlined in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Why this report is important

The environmental petitions process is a unique way for Canadian residents to bring their concerns and questions about environmental issues to the attention of the federal ministers responsible and to obtain responses from them. It offers Canadians an opportunity to open a dialogue with their government. The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development administers the environmental petitions process on behalf of the Auditor General of Canada.

The Commissioner posts summaries of the environmental petitions received and responses given on our website.

For more information

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