



Representing the Districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay

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June 22, 2012

Right Honourable Stephen Harper, MP. PC.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Canada's Experimental Lakes Area, located in Northwestern Ontario, is a world-renowned freshwater and fisheries research facility and the only place in the world where experiments can be performed on whole lakes with minimal external influence. Since 1968, this facility has been a natural outdoor laboratory to study the physical, chemical and biological processes in actual lake ecosystems.

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association represents the interests of 37 municipalities from Kenora and Rainy River in the west to Hornepayne and Wawa in the east. We are troubled by the recent announcement that your Government will close the Environmental Lakes Area in March 2013.

The Minister of Environment, Peter Kent, acknowledges that the "experimental lakes program has proved invaluable over the decades," but indicates that "Environment Canada is moving its scientists farther west, to examine the acidification of lakes in Western Canada." (Hansard, June 5, 2012). We understand the need to examine and realign priorities; however, we are concerned that the short timeline that has been set to withdraw Federal funding for this facility will not allow sufficient opportunity for other funding partnerships to be developed.

The expansion of mining opportunities in Northwestern Ontario will present new opportunities for regional based research. As such, we believe it is vital that the Environmental Lakes Area remain in operation.

We implore you to continue funding the Experimental Lakes Area and to assist them in finding alternative funding partners to ensure that this unique water research continues for decades to come.

Sincerely,

Ron Nelson  
President  
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- c. Honourable Peter Kent, Minister of Environment  
Honourable Keith Ashfield, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
Greg Rickford, MP Kenora  
John Rafferty, MP Thunder Bay-Rainy River  
Bruce Hyer, MP Thunder Bay-Superior North  
Diane Orihel, Save ELA