

# **Are you listening?**

## **Context Oriented Solutions for Public Consultation in the Ontario Municipal Class EA Process**

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### **Abstract**

Public consultation is vital to Ontario Municipal Class Environmental Assessment studies. It is important not only to notify and inform the public of a study, but also to ensure that anyone with an interest and insight into the context of the issues, environment and history of the area, has the opportunity to provide input throughout the study process. Critical to this involvement is for the proponent to “listen” to the concerns and issues raised throughout a project and endeavour to respond appropriately and completely with a context oriented solution.

This paper describes key methods used in Ontario Municipal Class Environmental Assessments for Schedule ‘C’ projects to elicit public input, while resolving potential issues, concerns and/or conflicts with stakeholders. The paper answers the following questions:

- Who in the general public should be notified?
- How should stakeholders / interested parties be identified, and notified?
- How should stakeholders be engaged in the study?
- How do you build “context” into the consultation opportunities?
- How should concerns / issues and responses be documented to address local issues?
- How can the consultation approach be used to minimize the risk of a Part II Order request?

The purpose of the paper is to identify effective public consultation methods and to provide guidelines to proponents, consultants, and other practitioners of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process on the most effective ways to engage stakeholders.

The methodologies documented in the paper are the result of the experience of the authors who have extensive public consultation experience. These documented strategies have been applied in many environmental assessment studies.