

Society
of Canadian
Limnologists



Société
canadienne de
Limnologie

The Honourable Keith Ashfield
Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

January 8, 2013

Dear Minister Ashfield,

On behalf of the aquatic science community in Canada, we wish to express our concern about the status of Canada's Experimental Lakes Area. At our annual Canadian Conference for Fisheries Research held on January 3-5, 2013 in Windsor Ontario, which was attended by over 330 Canadian scientists, the contributions of Canada's Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) were recognized. In particular, Dr. Raymond Hesslein, a former Scientist-in-Charge of the ELA, received this year's Rigler Award, Canada's highest honor for aquatic science. A special symposium at this meeting was also organized to celebrate ELA's accomplishments. At the Annual General Meeting of the Society of Canadian Limnologists, Canada's aquatic science community was still in shock that the Canadian innovations espoused at ELA could be terminated, and unanimously recognized the research at ELA for its critical contributions to Canadian fisheries and aquatic sciences. The science community further recognizes that ELA is not just its infrastructure; it is a group of dedicated professionals who know how to conduct world-class, policy-relevant experiments to protect Canada's freshwaters. The capacity for evidence-based science to address Canada's most pressing environmental problems, including the effects of climate change, invasive species and toxic chemicals, will be severely weakened with the closure of ELA. The Society of Canadian Limnologists, representing aquatic scientists across Canada, urges the Government of Canada to reconsider its decision to end support for ELA, or at least arrange its transfer to a suitable third party operator prior to the looming March 31st deadline, at which time federal support for Canada's Experimental Lakes Area is scheduled

to be terminated. Canada's aquatic science community awaits further news from you on the status of ELA.

Given the stated intent of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to transfer the facility to another party, we request a reply that indicates your Department's progress in identifying a new operator, whether any parties are providing bridge funding to support operations and staff in the transition, whether the Government of Canada is retaining liability for the site, and the degree of confidence the department has in this transfer. Alternatively, if the government is planning on rescinding its decision to end funding to the ELA, we would like information on that as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jules Blais', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Prof. Jules Blais, PhD, FRCGS

President of the Society of Canadian Limnologists

University of Ottawa

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cc:

Prof. Yves Prairie, UQAM

Prof. Alison Derry, UQAM

Prof. Roberto Quinlan, York University

The SCL Membership

Members of Parliament