

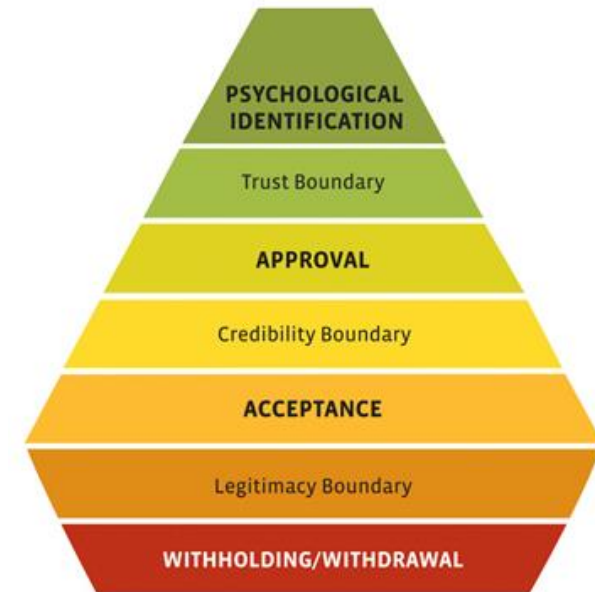
THE INEXTRICABLE LINKAGES BETWEEN EA AND SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE

Anneliese Grieve, Principal

Strategic Environmental Planning Solutions

What is Social Acceptance?

- “social license to operate”
- “Social licence is about ensuring public confidence in the decision-making for major resource projects.”
Government of Canada
- community/stakeholder perceptions of the social legitimacy and credibility of the project, and the presence or absence of true trust.
- Working to build trust and earn legitimacy and then maintaining both
- It doesn't mean everyone affected must agree to accept the project



Sources: R.Boutler & I.Thompson, 2011

Tension of Opposites

- There is a dynamic tension between “social acceptance” and “the public good”:
 - Tension between delivering the “public good” and “social acceptance” ;
 - “public good” is integral to and a driver of planning, decision-making and policy making processes. “Social acceptance” is external to and a force on planning, decision-making and policy making processes.
 - there’s a need to question whether, or at least the extent to which, the public good should be supplanted by social acceptance when making decisions on major projects



History of Efforts to Include Social Acceptance in EA in Ontario

- Halton Landfill Decision 1988 – Inclusion of Social Impact Assessment (SIA)
 - SIA facilitates the identification and mitigation of effects to a community
- Intervenor Funding Act 1988-1996 – provision of funding to facilitate intervenor participation in EAs and hearings
- Benefit Impact Agreements – often used to offset environmental and social effects and can include financial incentives
- Willing Host Siting Approaches – siting controversial projects in communities willing to accept them; waste management, jails, low level radioactive waste –
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement



Where are we now?

SIA is done for some projects but not always well; MOECC does not have internal expertise to evaluate SIA's nor is there any guidance available

Intervenor funding is ad hoc and based on the philosophy of each proponent and the demands of stakeholder groups. Many proponents fund peer reviews

Willing host siting is currently being used for high level radioactive waste federally

Many controversial projects do not gain public acceptance or "social license to operate"

Many proponents struggle to undertake meaningful stakeholder engagement; customized approaches are required

Professionals and policy makers find themselves in the position of having to push back against the drive towards social acceptance and actively manage expectations in trying to achieve a "public good"

Current Challenges

- Stakeholder opposition delaying and complicating EA approval processes
 - Oakville Generating Station
 - Energy East
- Distrust of MOECC, proponents and decision-makers
- EA process is being used to debate and resolve bigger issues
- Tension between greater “public good” and “social acceptance”



How do we make projects that serve a broader “public good” more socially acceptable to those affected by them?