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National Forests Act (84/1998): Consultation on the proposed amendments to the Regulations under the Act 49507

GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

NO. 3967 17 October 2023

NATIONAL FORESTS ACT, 1998 (ACT NO. 84 OF 1998)

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL FORESTS ACT, 1998 (ACT NO. 84 OF 1998)

I, Barbara Dallas Creecy, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, consult, in terms of sections 53(2)(j), read with section 54 of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998), on the proposed amendments to the Regulations under the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998), published under Government Notice R.466, in Government *Gazette* 32185 on 29 April 2009, as set out in the Schedule hereto.

These draft Amendment Regulations were initially published for public comment under Government Notice No. 3121, Government *Gazette* No. 48181 on 8 March 2023, but are being republished due to the substantive changes that have been effected after the closure of the initial public comment process.

Members of the public are invited to submit written comments to the proposed amendments, within thirty (30) days of publication of this notice in the Government *Gazette* or in the newspaper, whichever date is the last date, to any of the following addresses:

By post to: The Director-General: Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment

Attention: Ms Shumani Dzivhani

Private Bag X447
PRETORIA
0001

By hand at: Environment House, 473 Steve Biko Road, Arcadia, 0083

By email at: sdzivhani@dffe.gov.za.

Any enquiries in connection with the draft Notice can be directed to Ms Shumani Dzivhani at 0123095765/0721979264.

Comments received after the closing date may not be considered.

BARBARA DALLAS CREECY

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SCHEDULE

Definitions

 In these Regulations, any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act bears that meaning and, unless the context otherwise indicates—

"the Act" means the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998); and

"the Regulations" means the Regulations under the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998), published under Government Notice R.466, of Government *Gazette* 32185 on 29 April 2009.

Amendment of regulation 1 of the Regulations

- 2. Regulation 1 of the Regulations is hereby amended by the insertion after the definition of "access", of the following definitions:
 - ""appeal administrator" means the holder of an office in the Department that administers an appeal on behalf of the appeal authority;
 - "appeal authority" means the Minister;
 - "appeal committee" means a panel of experts with expertise appointed by the Minister;
 - "appellant" means any person who is aggrieved by an administrative decision or action of the delegated authority taken in terms of the Act and who has submitted an appeal in terms of section 57A of the Act;";

Amendment of regulation 24 of the Regulations

3. Regulation 24 of the Regulations is hereby amended by the insertion after regulation 24 of the following regulation:

"24A. Issuing of written notice

- (1) The Minister may issue a written notice in terms of section 7(5) of the Act to inform any person suspected of contravening section 7(1)(a) of the Act to stop an illegal activity or an unauthorized development in terms of the Act using **Annexure A** to these Regulations.
- (2) The Minister may issue a written notice to any person responsible for any structure, material or equipment that has been unlawfully erected, constructed or used within a natural forest to remove such structure, material or equipment that has been brought onto the affected site using **Annexure** A to these Regulations.
- (3) Before issuing a written notice in terms of subregulation (1) and (2), the Minister, must give the person to whom the written notice is intended, using the form set out in **Annexure B** to these Regulations—
 - (a) advance written notice of his or her intention to issue such written notice and

- (b) a reasonable opportunity to make written representations to the Minister as to why he or she should not issue the written notice as intended.
- (4) If the Minister has reason to believe that giving an advance notice, in accordance with subregulation (3), of the intention to issue a written notice, will cause a delay which may result in significant and sudden harm to the natural forest habitat, the Minister may issue a written notice, without compliance with subregulation (3).".

Amendment of regulation 25 of the Regulations

4. Regulation 25 of the Regulations is hereby amended by the insertion after regulation 25 of the following regulation:

"CHAPTER 11 ADMINISTRATION AND PROCESSING OF APPEALS

25A. Application

- (1) This chapter applies to an appeal against a decision taken in terms of the Act.
- (2) No appeal is available against a decision taken by the appeal authority.

25B. Establishment of Appeals Committee

25Ba. Appointment of Appeals Committee

- (1) Whenever it is necessary to appoint the Committee:
 - (a) the Minister must by notice in the Government Gazette and by means of a notice published in at least two nationally distributed newspapers invite nominations, specifying a period within which the nominations must be submitted;
 - (b) a shortlist of suitable candidates from the nominations should be compiled and submitted to the Minister within one month of receiving the nominations; and
 - (c) the Minister must appoint the members of the Committee after considering the short list.
- (2) The Minister may appoint—
 - (a) an alternate member for any member of the Committee; and
 - (b) a replacement for any member who vacates or is removed from his or her office.
- (3) The replacement serves for the balance of the term of the person he or she replaces.
- (4) The Minister must appoint one member of the Committee as chairperson and one member as vice-chairperson.

25Bb. Conditions of appointment of Committee members

- (1) A member of the Committee holds office for a period that does not exceed-
 - (a) four (4) years in the case of the chairperson of the Committee; and
 - (b) three (3) years in the case of other members.
- (2) At the expiry of his or her term of office, a member is eligible for re-appointment for another final term not exceeding four (4) years in the case of the chairperson and three (3) years in the case of other members.
- (3) A member or alternate member of the Committee must vacate or be removed from his or her office if –
 - (a) the Minister at any time terminates his or her term of office;
 - (b) he or she can no longer perform his or her duties on the Committee;
 - (c) he or she is convicted of an offence and sentenced to imprisonment without the option of a fine:
 - (d) he or she is absent for more than two (2) consecutive meetings of the Committee without the leave of the chairperson; or
 - (e) he or she resigns by written notice to the Minister.
- (4) Members of the Committee must be paid such remuneration and allowances as the Minister may determine with the concurrence of the Minister of Finance.

25C. Submission of appeal

- (1) An appellant must, within 20 days from the date the notification was sent, submit an appeal—
 - (a) to the appeal administrator using the form set out in **Annexure C**;
 - (b) to the applicant, where the appellant is not the applicant;
 - (c) where applicable, to any registered, interested and affected party, where the appellant is the applicant; and
 - (d) to any affected organs of state.
- (2) An appeal submitted in terms of sub regulation (1) must—
 - (a) be in writing;
 - (b) be in the form obtainable from the appeal administrator;
 - (c) include a statement setting out the grounds of appeal; and
 - (d) include the supporting documentation, which is referred to in the appeal.

25D. Responding to an appeal

The applicant (where the applicant is not the appellant), the decision-maker, interested and affected parties and organ(s) of state, must submit their responses, to the appeal authority and the appellant within 10 days from the date of receipt of the appeal submission.

25E. Answering to an appeal

The appellant may, within 10 days from the date of notification of the written response to the appeal, submit an answer to the response in writing to the administrator, only in so far as the responding statement raises new information and or issues. The answering statement must identify the new issues and/or information raised in the responding statement and answer only thereto.

25F. Additional information

The appeal administrator may at any time during an appeal process, request any party participating in the appeal process, to submit additional information or arrange a meeting with relevant parties.

25G. Decision on appeal

- (1) The appeal administrator/appeal committee must make recommendations to the appeal authority within 30 days of receiving the response to an appeal or answer to a response.
- (2) The appeal authority must decide on an appeal, and notify the appellant, applicant, and, where applicable, any registered, interested and affected party and affected organs of state, of its decision within 30 days of receiving recommendations from the appeal administrator.
- (3) An appeal decision must contain written reasons for the decision.

25H. Processing of appeal

- (1) The appeal administrator must acknowledge receipt of an appeal, responding or answering to an appeal, respectively, within five working days after receiving either.
- (2) The appeal administrator must notify the appellant and the applicant, if applicable, within five working days of the appointment of an advisory appeal panel or expert.

25I. Extension or Condonation of timeframes

(1) The timeframes contemplated in regulations 25C, 25D, 25E and 25F, 25G may be extended or condoned, on application submitted in writing by the relevant party to the appeal administrator.

- (2) An application for extension of timeframes must not be submitted later than 5 days prior to the lapsing of the period to which the extension relates.
- (3) An application for condonation of timeframes must not be submitted later than 15 days after the lapsing of the period to which the condonation relates.
- (4) When considering an extension or condonation, the Minister must consider the following factors:
 - (a) the degree of lateness;
 - (b) the detailed explanation provided of the reasons for the entire duration of the lateness;
 - (c) whether and to what extent any party to the appeal will suffer prejudice if the time period is extended or failure to comply with a time period is condoned; and
 - (d) a detailed explanation of the merits of the application for extension or condonation.

25J. Complex appeals

- (1) The appeal authority may decide an appeal is complex if it requires: -
 - (a) an external expert/ specialist to assist the appeal authority to render a decision;
 - (b) the appeal administrator to undertake a site inspection to properly advise the appeal authority; or
 - (c) more than one appeal administrator to process the appeal due to the volume of its documents or the technical nature of its subject matter.
- (2) Despite Regulation 25G, if the appeal authority decides an appeal is complex based on the need to appoint an expert, then:
 - (a) the appeal administrator/appeal committee must commence with the process to appoint an expert within 10 days of the instruction from the appeal authority;
 - (b) the expert panel must provide their recommendations to the appeal administrator within 30 days of receiving the instruction from the appeal administrator.
 - (c) the appeal administrator must provide recommendations to the Minister within 20 days of receiving the expert recommendation; and
 - (d) the appeal authority must decide on an appeal, and notify the appellant, applicant, and, where applicable, any registered, interested and affected party and affected organs of state, of its decision within 30 days of receiving recommendations from the appeal administrator.
- (3) If the appeal authority decides an appeal is complex based on the need to do a site inspection, then—

- the appeal administrator/appeal committee must undertake the site inspection within
 days of the instruction from the appeal authority; and
- (b) where an appeal is complex in terms of regulation 25J(1) (b) and (c) of these Regulations, then—
 - the appeal administrator must make recommendations to the appeal authority within 30 days of response or answer, whichever is applicable; and
 - (ii) despite regulation 25F of these Regulations, the appeal authority may decide on an appeal and notify the appellant, applicant, and where applicable, any registered, interested and affected party and organs of state, of its decision within 50 days of receiving recommendations from the appeal administrator.

25K. Delivery of documents

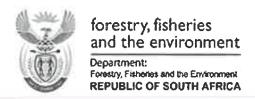
A person may deliver documents in terms of these Regulations by electronic mail to NFAAppeals@dffe.gov.za

25L. Reckoning of days

- (1) When days must be reckoned in terms of these Regulations, the period must be reckoned as from the start of the day following that particular day to the end of the last day of the period, but if the last day of the period falls on a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday, that period must be extended to the end of the next day, which is not a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday, and the period between 15 December to 5 January must be excluded from the reckoning of days.
- (2) Where a prescribed timeframe is affected by one or more public holidays, the timeframe must be extended by the number of public holiday days falling within that timeframe."

5. Short title and commencement

These Regulations are called the National Forests Act Amendment Regulations, 2023, and come into operation on the date of publication for implementation in the Government *Gazette*.



ANNEXURE A

WRITTEN NOTICE

(in terms of regulation 24A(1) and/ or (2))

Ref:
Enquiries:
Physical address:
Tel:

Email:

[Name of person to be issued a written notice]

[Address]

[Contact details]

Dear Sir/Madam

WRITTEN NOTICE IN TERMS OF REGULATION 24A FOR CONTRAVENING SECTION 7(1)(a) OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS ACT, 1998 (ACT NO. 84 OF 1998) AS AMENDED IN RESPECT OF [INSERT ILLEGAL ACTIVITY COMMENCED WITH] AT [INSERT PROPERTY/SITE DESCRIPTION ERF/PORTION/STREET NUMBER AND NAME] UNDER [INSERT MUNICIPALITY] ("THE SITE").

1. INTRODUCTION

Reference is made to the matter above and to the following:

1.1. [Details of the notice of intention to issue a written notice, any representations received from the alleged transgressor and any other relevant correspondence]..

2. DECISION

- 2.1. I, [insert name of official], in my capacity as[insert designation], having considered the matter, am of the view that you, [insert Person's Name/ company name] represented by [insert name of representative] in your capacity as [insert capacity in the company)], as the person who has unlawfully commenced or continued with illegal activities on the Site, have failed to adhere to the provisions of the law in respect of the commenced activities on the Site.
- 2.2. Accordingly, I hereby issue you, [insert Person's Name/ company name] represented by [insert name of representative] as the person who has unlawfully commenced or continued with [list illegal

activities] on the Site with a written notice in terms of Regulation 24A for contravening section 7(1)(a) of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998) as amended.

3. DETAILS AND RATIONALE FOR ISSUING WRITTEN NOTICE

- 3.1. [Refer to any inspections conducted, finding, site observations made].
- 3.2. Section number

Section 7(1)(a) of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No.84 of 1998), as amended

3.3. Legal Provision:

Written notice in terms of regulation 24A for contravening section 7(1)(a) of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No.84 of 1998) as amended.

- 3.4. Natural Forest Type and Forest Status e.g., Mangrove Forest is classified as an endangered ecosystem in terms of the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No.10 of 2004).
- 3.5. Estimated area/quantity of natural forest/indigenous tree or any other indigenous vegetation in a natural forest that is cut, disturbed, damaged or destroyed or possessed, collected, removed, transported, exported, purchased, sold, donated or in any other manner acquired or disposed of.
- 3.6. Geographical Positioning System (GPS) Coordinates of the affected area depicted on a Google Earth or spatial map.
- 3.7. Name of tree species cut, disturbed, damaged or destroyed (if identifiable) or possessed, collected, removed, transported, exported, purchased, sold, donated, or in any other manner acquired or disposed of any tree, or any forest product derived from a natural forest.

4. INSTRUCTION OR STEPS TO BE TAKEN

In terms of this written notice, I require you to do the following:

- 4.1 [Indicate steps to be taken, insert details in respect of the steps to be taken by the person accused of non-compliance and the period in which these steps must be taken]
- 4.2 [Prohibited conduct: List any acts which may not be performed by the person accused of non-compliance and the period in which the prohibition will remain in force.]

5. PROCEDURAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.1. If you wish to lodge an objection to this written notice, you may do so in writing to the Minister within 30 days of receipt of the written notice.
- 5.2. Objections must be submitted in writing to NFAAppeals@dffe.gov.za.

6. FAILURE TO COMPLY

Act / Section Number

Sections 7(1)(a) and 7(5) read with section 62(1) of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No.84 of 1998).

Offence and penalty

Offence: Section 61. Any person who fails to take the steps which he or she has been instructed to take in terms of [section] sections 4(8), 7(5), 8(3), 14(6) and 17(3) within the period or the extended period laid down, is guilty of a fifth category offence.

Section 62(1) Any person who contravenes the prohibition of certain acts in relation to trees, indigenous vegetation or any other forest product in natural forests referred to in section 7(1) is guilty of a first category offence.

Section 63(5) Any person who contravenes a condition in a licence, exemption, or any other authorisation in terms of this Act, in respect of—

- (a) a protected area, a natural forest, or protected trees, is guilty of a second category offence.
- (b) any other forest, is guilty of a third category offence. **Penalty**:

Section 58(1) - A person who is guilty of a first category offence referred to in sections 62 and 63 may be sentenced to a fine or imprisonment for a period of up to three years, or to both a fine and such imprisonment.

Section 58(2) - A person who is guilty of a second category offence referred to in section 62, 63 and 64 may be sentenced on a first conviction for that offence to a fine or imprisonment for a period of up to two years, or to both a fine and such imprisonment.

Section 58(3) - A person who is guilty of a third category offence referred to in section 62 and 63 may be sentenced on a first conviction for that offence to a fine or imprisonment for a period of up to one year, or to both a fine and such imprisonment.

Section 58(4) - A person who is guilty of a fourth category offence referred to in section 63 and 64 may be sentenced on a first conviction for that offence to a fine or a community service for a period of up to six months or to both a fine and such service.

Section 58(5) - A person who is guilty of a second, third or fourth offence category offence may be sentenced on a second conviction for that offence as if he or she has

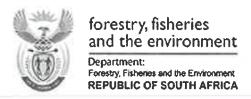
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		committed a first, second or third category offence, respectively.
		Section 58(6) - A person who is guilty of a fifth category offence referred to in section 61 may be sentenced to a fine not exceeding R10 million or imprisonment a period of up to
		10 years or to both such fine and imprisonment.
		Section 58(8)(b) - A court which sentences any person for any offence in terms of this Act, may suspend or revoke a licence granted to the offender under section 7, 15 or 23.
6.1	forest management and with a view to a c	ns contained herein are made in the interest of sustainable ooperative resolution of the issue. The submission of the ly that no further action would be taken against you.
5.2		ce [insert licence number] has been revoked due to the
6.3	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	is written notice, kindly contact the person indicated for

Yours sincerely

Date:

[Insert Name of official])
[Designation]

Received b	y Mr /Ms		
on behalf o	f the company		
on this	day of	, at	
Signature			



ANNEXURE B NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ISSUE A WRITTEN NOTICE

(in terms of regulation 24A(3))

Ref: Enquiries: Physical address: Tel: Email:

[Name of person to be issued a Notice of Intention]

[Address]

[Contact details]

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ISSUE A WRITTEN NOTICE IN TERMS OF REGULATION 24A(3) FOR CONTRAVENING OF SECTION 7 (1) (a) OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS ACT, 1998 (ACT NO. 84 OF 1998) AS AMENDED IN RESPECT OF [INSERT ILLEGAL ACTIVITY COMMENCED WITH] AT [INSERT PROPERTY/SITE DESCRIPTION ERF/PORTION/STREET NUMBER AND NAME] UNDER [INSERT MUNICIPALITY] ("THE SITE").

- 1. I, [insert name of official], in my capacity as [insert designation]r, hereby give you written notice of my intention to issue you, [insert name of natural person/company represented by [insert name of representative] in your capacity as [insert capacity of representative in company], as the person who has unlawfully commenced with illegal activities at [insert property description] under [insert relevant Municipality] with a written notice in terms of section 7(5) of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998) as amended read with regulation 24A of the these Regulations.
- 2. The written notice that I intend to issue relates to your non-compliance with [indicate relevant legislation / Regulation].

- 3. I have reasonable grounds for believing that you have commenced, on or after [insert date], with illegal activities in terms of Regulation 24A contravening sections (7) (1) (a) without a licence required in terms of the Act.
- **4.** I have reached this opinion because of the following:
 - 4.1 [Refer to any correspondences between the transgressor and the Department, inspections conducted, and the observation made, spatial analysis that was conducted e.g., aerial imagery, and any other relevant correspondence].
 - 4.2 List the illegal activities observed on site in relation to the Act.

5. INTENDED INSTRUCTIONS

- In accordance with Regulation 24A of the Regulations read with the Promotion of Administration of Justice Act, 2000 (Act No. 3 of 2000), I hereby afford you the opportunity to make written representations to me within [insert time frame] calendar days of receipt of this Notice, if you are of the view that there are any compelling and substantial reasons for me not to exercise my powers in terms of Regulation 24A contravening [Insert relevant section of the Act] to issue a written notice which will require you to, inter alia:
- 5.2 [insert specific instructions that would be given in the written notice to address thenon-compliances

6. PROCEDURAL ARRANGEMENTS

- You may make representations to me as the [insert designation] in relation to this notice of intention within seventy two (72) hours [insert timeframe], at the following address: [insert physical address or e-mail address]
- 6.2 Should you fail to comply with this written notice of intention above, which is to make representations in writing, a written notice will be issued.
- 6.3 Failure to comply with a written notice when it has been issued, you will have committed an offence in terms of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998).
- The Department will be entitled to take the required steps on your behalf and to claim from you any costs incurred in so doing.
- We wish to make it clear that the instructions contained herein are made in the interest of sustainable forest management and with a view to a co-operative resolution of the issue. Depending on the outcome of the representations made in this regard, the Department will decide upon a way forward regarding this matter. The submission of the requested information above does not imply that no further action would be taken against you.
- 6.6 If you are unclear about any aspect of this notice of intention, kindly contact the person indicated for enquiries in writing as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely			
[Name of official]	<u></u> :		
[Designation] [Date]			

ACKNOWL	EDGMENT	OF RECEIPT:

Received to on behalf of	by Mr /Ms of the company		
On this	day of	, at	2)
Signature			



ANNEXURE C APPEAL FORM

(in terms of regulation 25C)

APPEAL FORM IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS ACT, 1998 (ACT NO. 84 OF 1998)

Environment House, Cnr. Steve Biko (previously Beatrix Street) and Soutpansberg Road, 473 Steve Biko, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0083, South Africa

Enquiries: Chivonne Candice Webber

021 402 3349

cweber@dffe.gov.za

Nosipho Nombewu

012 399 9626

nnombewu@dffe.gov.za

Please submit your completed appeal form and supporting documentation to:

NFAAppeals@dffe.gov.za

NOTE:

- (1) This form should only be utilized if you are submitting an appeal in terms of any section of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998 as amended).
- (2) An electronic version of this form may be obtained from the Departmental website at www.dffe.gov.za
- (3) The completed appeal form must be posted or submitted electronically to the above email address.
- (4) Information requested must be provided in the allocated spaces. If the allocated space is insufficient, additional pages may be attached as an Annexure.
- (5) Information should be as brief and clear as possible.
- (6) Where provided with boxes the appropriate box should be ticked.

- (7) The appeal must be submitted to the Minister within 20 (twenty) days after the decision has been granted by the Department and the applicant has been notified in writing of the Department's decision.
- (8) A copy of supporting documents (e.g., reports) must be attached to this form on submission.
- (9) This form must be duly signed by the appellant or the appellant's duly appointed representative.

	PA	RT A1. APPELLANT'S DETAILS	
Full	name	of	Appellant
Company	Name	(if	applicable)
Identity document	t number or passport nur	mber (Attach a certified copy):	
Physical Address		Postal Address	
Tel no. (work)	Postal Code	Tel no. (home)	Postal Code
Fax number:		Terno. (nome)	
Mobile number:			
Email address:			
	PART A2. DULY AUTHO	ORISED REPRESENTATIVE'S DI	ETAILS (if applicable)
dentity document	number or passport nun	nber (Attach a certified copy):	
Physical Address		Postal Address	

	Postal Code		Postal Code	
Tel no. (work)	1 Ostal Oode	Tel no. (home)	1 Ostal Oode	
Fax number:				
Mobile number:				
E-mail address:				

PART B. INFORMATION OF THE DECISION TO BE APPEALED

1.	Project Name (where applicable):
2.	Property Description (Street Name, ERF number, PTN number, Farm Number, Suburb/Town, Local Municipality, District Municipality, Province):
3.	Brief description of the activity:
4.	Department's decision on the abovementioned project:
5.	Licence number (where applicable):
6.	Were you notified of the Department's decision? (Yes/No):
7.	If yes, please provide date of decision and proof of correspondence:

PART C: NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPEAL

- 1. Have you notified the Department of the intention to appeal the Department's decision? (Yes/No)
- 2. If yes, provide the date of notice of intention was lodged (attached a copy of the correspondence)

PART D: GROUNDS OF APPEAL

1.	Provide a statement setting out the ground/s of your appearance.	al.
2.	Does your appeal contain any new information that was no Department's decision? (Yes/No).	ot submitted to the Department before the
3.	If yes, please provide the information e.g. why was the Department before the Department's decision and reasons	
4.	Please list any attachments that are included in your appea	al document:
	b	
	d	
	e	
Appella	ant's Signature (Or duly appointed	Date
represe	entative)	

Appeal received by:	Date:
Attachments included: YES NO	
Copies of notifications attached: YES □ NO □	
Ref No:	
Signature	
Office of the Minister	

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