



Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H3

Band Councillor Sheldon Atlookan
Aroland First Nation
PO Box 10
Aroland ON P0T 1B0

<email address removed>

Dear Mr. Atlookan:

Thank you for your letter dated October 1, 2019, on behalf of Aroland First Nation expressing your interest in the conduct of a regional assessment for the James Bay Lowlands area. We also received your letter dated November 15, 2019 proposing a geographic boundary for the assessment.

I concur with the merits of conducting a regional assessment in an area centered on the Ring of Fire mineral deposits in the Far North of Ontario (Ring of Fire area), pursuant to the *Impact Assessment Act*, for the following reasons:

- A regional assessment could inform future project-specific federal impact assessments and decisions.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) has informed me that it anticipates the proposal of road infrastructure, mining development and other physical activities in the Ring of Fire area may be subject to the *Impact Assessment Act*. A regional assessment would inform and contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of these future impact assessments.

- Anticipated development has the potential to cause adverse effects within federal jurisdiction, including cumulative effects, in the area.

The effects within federal jurisdiction from anticipated development could include but are not limited to effects that may contribute to climate change, and adverse effects on fish and fish habitat and numerous migratory bird populations under the *Migratory Bird Convention Act* as well as wildlife listed under the *Species at Risk Act*.

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- There are opportunities for collaboration with jurisdictions, and for the involvement of others in the regional assessment.

There are opportunities to collaborate with the province of Ontario and to involve Indigenous groups, non-government organizations, and others in the planning and conduct of a regional assessment.

- There is potential for impacts, including cumulative impacts, to the rights of Indigenous people in the area.

The Ring of Fire area is within Treaty 9 territory and it is home to approximately 24,000 First Nations people. Anticipated development in the area will impact Aboriginal and treaty rights, traditional lands and resources, socio-economic conditions, health and community well-being.

- There has been considerable public interest related to development or cumulative effects in the area.

In addition to your request, I received two other requests for a regional assessment in the Ring of Fire area. Further, during a public comment period for the Webequie Supply Road and the Marten Falls Community Access Road impact assessments, the Agency received submissions, including a submission from Aroland First Nation, expressing concern related to development and cumulative effects, as well as support for a regional assessment in this area.

I have yet to determine the terms of reference for the Ring of Fire regional assessment. My intent would be to carry out a regional assessment in full partnership with the province of Ontario.

As a first step, I have instructed Agency officials to meet with you to discuss appropriate activities, outcomes and spatial and temporal boundaries for the regional assessment. The Agency will involve other Indigenous groups and non-government organizations, and will continue to meet with the province of Ontario and other federal departments. I have instructed Agency officials to provide me with the results of such discussions by the fall of this year.

Further questions regarding the regional assessment may be directed to Debra Myles, Senior Advisor, Strategic and Regional Assessments by telephone at (613) 957-0626 or by email at debra.myles@canada.ca. Ms. Myles will contact you in the coming days to discuss the regional assessment and the continued participation of Aroland First Nation in this process.

Sincerely,

<original signed by>

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P.