

Information Session Presentation Transcript

0:01: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our public information session on the regional assessment in the Ring of Fire area.

0:12: You can participate in today's discussion by typing comments in the chat, asking questions in the Q&A feature, or using the raise hand function to let us know if you'd like to speak aloud.

00:22: To access the chat, click the speech bubble icon at the bottom of the screen.

00:25: When it's your turn to speak, you can unmute yourself using the microphone button on the bottom left hand of your screen.

00:32: We ask everyone to stay muted unless given the floor to speak so we can all hear each other better.

00:38: You are welcome to write a comment in the chat or a question in the Q&A feature at any time during the session, but we will be addressing them as well as any spoken questions or comments at the end of the presentation.

00:49: We will do our best to answer all questions in the time we have, and we'll follow up afterwards if necessary.

00:56: When you are writing in the chat or speaking, we also invite you to include your name in the organization you represent, if any, and feel free to express yourself in the official language of your choice.

1:17: We have a couple of things to cover today, including an overview of this regional assessment, the Interim Report that was just released, as well as the information-sharing platform, next steps for the conduct phase, and finally, an interactive Q&A session.

1:47: Before we start, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the Matawa, Mushkegowuk and Weenusk First Nation partners who co-lead the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire, within Treaty No. 9 territory, and whose deep relationships with these lands and waters guide this work.

2:01: We are grateful for the knowledge shared by Elders, Youth, Knowledge Keepers, land users, and community members from the 15 participating communities, whose teachings about the lands, waters, animals, and medicines ground the Regional Assessment.

2:21: Regional Assessments are a planning tool used to assess the positive and negative effects of multiple existing and future developments and activities in a specific geographic region, including cumulative effects.

2:33: They look broader than a single project to understand impacts at the regional level and provide more comprehensive analyses to help inform future impact assessment decisions and other decision-making processes related to development in the region.

2:47: Regional assessments focus on bigger effects, which are often challenging to address during individual project-level assessments and decisions.

2:55: The regional assessment in the Ring of Fire area is being co-led by 15 First Nations and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency).

3:03: Collectively, we are known as the Regional Assessment Working Group (the RAWG/the Working Group), and we were established to conduct this regional assessment.

3:11: The RAWG consists of a community member from each First Nation partner who has been delegated by their chief and representatives from the Agency.

3:20: These individuals have diverse expertise or experience relevant to conducting regional assessments or knowledge of First Nations context, including the context of the First Nation partners' communities and customs.

3:35: Here we have the guiding principles that shape and ground this regional assessment.

3:39: These principles reflect our shared commitment to a respectful, inclusive, and forward-looking process, so we're going to take some time to share them because they're important.

3:50: At the top of our list, first and foremost, Indigenous values, interests, and priorities are placed at the center of this assessment.

3:57: This means the process is shaped by the perspectives, languages, and worldviews of the First Nation partners.

4:03: This is also not a top-down process.

4:07: It is collaborative and co-led by the 15 First Nation partners and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

4:13

We work together through the RAWG, ensuring all decisions are made jointly.

4:20: During this regional assessment, we are also weaving together Indigenous knowledge systems rooted in tradition, natural law, and lived experience with Western science.

4:29: This interdisciplinary approach ensures a more holistic understanding of the region.

4:37: Our work is also grounded in a shared definition and understanding of sustainability, one that includes intergenerational perspectives like the seven generation teachings.

4:47: This helps us think long-term and responsibly about our work.

4:55: This assessment is also about building a renewed relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples, one that is based on mutual respect, the recognition of rights, and true partnership.

5:06

In doing so, it supports reconciliation through every step.

5:13: We are also creating opportunities to build and share knowledge and capacity.

5:18: This includes supporting First Nation partners in conducting studies and contributing meaningfully to the final report.

5:28: Transparency is key for this regional assessment.

5:30: We're committed to making the process and outcomes accessible to all while also respecting the confidentiality of sensitive Indigenous knowledge.

5:42: We also aim to maximize opportunities for meaningful participation, not just from Indigenous communities, but also the public, experts, and other stakeholders.

5:54: And last but not least, one of our guiding principles is to respect traditional knowledge.

6:01: Traditional knowledge, natural law, and customs are not just included, they are central to the assessment.

6:07: And importantly, First Nation partners retain the right to control access to their traditional knowledge.

6:13: These principles are not just words, they are the foundation of how we work together, how we make decisions, and how we ensure this assessment is truly reflective of the communities it impacts.

6:27: The regional assessment in the Ring of Fire area is focused on existing and future development activities centered on the Ring of Fire development area, which is outlined in this image with a black dashed square.

6:39: It will also focus on any associated infrastructure and induced development that may occur in the region.

6:47: Since impacts will not stay confined to the development area and associated infrastructure is likely to be built throughout the region, the assessment area, outlined in light green, captures the true regional scale of this assessment.

7:00: The assessment area also includes the communities and traditional territories of the First Nation partners, as you can see marked on the map.

7:12: The conduct phase of this regional assessment started on January 20th, 2025.

7:17: Shortly after, the Working Group developed a work plan for the assessment, which is called the Maajitao or Majitata.

7:23: It shows the activities that will lead to the deliverables of the regional assessment.

7:28: Recently, we completed task 10 of the work plan, the Interim Report,

7:34: which serves as a crucial checkpoint in the regional assessment, providing a comprehensive overview of our progress to date, information collected, as well as a gap analysis and early recommendations.

7:44: We also recently launched the public Information Sharing Platform, which is designed to be a central hub for all regional assessment-related information.

7:52: This platform enhances transparency and ensures everyone has the information they need.

7:57: We will be discussing these two products in more detail in the coming slides.

8:03: It's also important to note that while some tasks like the Interim Report have a defined timeline, other conduct phase activities are ongoing throughout much of the regional assessment.

8:13: This includes technical sessions, which are used to enhance our collective expertise and facilitate knowledge sharing, information sessions like this one to keep participants informed, up to date, and ensure continuous communication, and community engagement, which is a priority for the Working Group in order to gather valuable feedback and input that will help inform the regional assessment.

8:35: The next big defined milestone for this regional assessment is the final report.

8:40: It will encapsulate the entirety of the regional assessment, providing a thorough analysis and the key findings of the Working Group.

8:46: It will include detailed recommendations based on our research, community knowledge, and the data collected throughout the project and aims to provide actionable insights and guidance for future initiatives.

9:02: Now we will provide some details on the recently released Interim Report.

9:08: The Interim Report is a requirement in the Working Group's terms of reference and is based on information gathered and discussions held by all partners in the regional assessment.

9:16: It was submitted to chiefs of the First Nation partners and the minister on January 20th, 2026.

9:22: The report talks about four main things.

9:25: First is the milestones reached to date, some of which we just discussed.

9:29: In addition to making our MAajitao or Majitata, we also started a growing list of experts who can assist the Working Group on different parts of the regional assessment, held technical workshops on topics like peatlands and permafrost or industry and economics, started to collect information from federal departments and agencies as well as from Indigenous groups and the public through a variety of avenues, and finally created online spaces to share data known as the GeoHubs and the public information sharing platform.

9:58: The report also covered key issues, such as those related to community well-being, shown here, as well as existing conditions and information gaps for a variety of topics.

10:10: The report also gives a progress update on mapping the various development scenarios represented in this image.

10:16: And finally, the Interim Report provided some early recommendations organized by key themes.

10:26: The report used the four assessment priority themes set out in the terms of reference to help guide its structure, which each theme having its own section of the report.

10:34: These themes are to be well together, cultural and spiritual well-being, social and economic equity, and healthy environment and relationships.

10:45: Within these sections, several urgent issues for healthcare, safety, housing, infrastructure, and cost of living were identified.

10:53: The barriers to meeting community goals within small reserve boundaries are discussed.

10:58: There are acknowledgments for the different ways each community practices spiritual well-being and a common connection to the land for spiritual well-being is highlighted.

11:07: Examples of positive community-driven work that could be built on are modeled after, to help address challenges are explored.

11:14: And finally, several key observations are highlighted alongside early recommendations and priorities for the regional assessment in the months ahead.

11:22: Overall, these sections begin to report on what exists now and shares what the RAWG has heard so far about key challenges, concerns, and interests for the people living in this region.

11:32: If you would like to see the intro report, it is available on the registry.

11:39: Next, we will go over the Information Sharing Platform, or ISP.

11:45: The ISP was launched January 20th, 2026, alongside the Interim Report.

11:50: It is a platform that allows users to interact with data, maps, and information that supports the regional assessment.

11:57: It was built with ArcGIS Hub, if you are familiar with that software, and the Matawa and Mushkegowuk councils are also developing platforms on ArcGIS Hub that will complement the ISP.

12:08: but these will be more focused on storing data for their member First Nations rather than for public use.

12:14: The ISP has three main components, a data catalog, an interactive map, and story maps.

12:22: The data catalog, as the name suggests, is a catalog of data, information, and sources relevant to the regional assessment.

12:28: All of the data sets that are used to make the interactive map can be found there.

12:32: Users can also search through the catalog using filters such as content, tags, categories, and dates, or with specific terms in the search function.

12:43: Next is the interactive map.

12:45: It displays geospatial information in and around the assessment area.

12:50: It contains a wide variety of relevant layers that visually display environmental, socioeconomic, geographic, infrastructure, and impact assessment information.

12:59: The map also has interactive tools that allow users to display buffers, measure distances, add polygons, and much more.

13:08: Finally, the ISP contains story maps, which are a web-based tool to display content, information, multimedia, and maps in a highly visual and engaging way.

13:18: They combine text with visuals, such as that on the screen here, as well as videos and pop-ups.

13:25: So far, we have a story map displaying the highlights for the terms of reference.

13:30: But more story maps will be uploaded to the ISP in the coming months to share and communicate the work being done as part of this regional assessment.

13:37: We have also shared a link to the ISP in the chat, and it is available on the registry if you want to check it out.

13:42: Now that we're up to date on the progress for the regional assessment in the Ring of Fire, let's talk about next steps.

13:54: Throughout the conduct phase of the regional assessment, there are a variety of opportunities for participation, which are laid out in the Participation Plan that was posted publicly on June 19, 2025.

14:06: The Participation Plan ensures informed participation of Indigenous peoples in the public.

14:10: It encourages sharing of Indigenous knowledge and cultural considerations, promotes engagement of different community parts, including women, Youth, and Elders,

14:19: and ensures continuous participation opportunities at key stages.

14:23: Some of the upcoming and ongoing activities for participation during the conduct phase are information sessions such as these, which are for Indigenous peoples and the public to provide updates on ongoing activities related to the regional assessment.

14:35: It is worth noting that there is an upcoming in-person information session in Timmins on March 25th, 2026 at Cedar Meadows Resort and Spa.

14:46: There will also be an in-person information session in Thunder Bay in the coming months, but final details are being confirmed.

14:54: The councils and the Agency will be advertising both of these sessions using their socials, and we will also send out information via e-mail to our distribution list.

15:05: The next upcoming and ongoing activity is the Call for Information.

15:09: This is used to gather baseline data in the assessment area and was posted in Fall of 2025.

15:15: It is still open and ongoing if you have information you would like to share with us.

15:21: The next opportunity for participation is the draft final report and potential recommendations, which will be posted to the intranet site for comments and engagement from Indigenous peoples and the public.

15:35: We also use a variety of other tools for participation, including online engagement through the internet site, social media, and virtual sessions, conducting in-person presentations and engagement sessions in central locations or within First Nation communities, informing participants through various communication channels such as emails, phone calls, and public notices, and organizing workshops and technical sessions on specific topics of interest.

16:04: With that in mind, the next steps for the Working Group are to finalize the 16 development scenarios that depict various levels of development and different governance structures.

16:14: Once complete, they will be used to help in our analysis of potential impacts and cumulative effects, as well as guide recommendations included in the final report.

16:23: The Working Group will also continue to expand the information sharing platform as discussed,

16:28: including the addition of new data to the interactive map and catalog, as well as more story maps.

16:35: Now that the baseline data has been gathered through research, public contributions, other federal agencies and departments, as well as community engagement with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and land users, the RAWG have begun assessing potential impacts of development and identifying mitigation measures.

16:51: To support these deliverables, the RAWG has hired a number of consultants from the roster of expert supports to conduct studies and other work, including mapping scenarios, evaluating mineral potential in the region, conducting a review of Western Science, assessing cost of living and its effects in the assessment area, and a hydrology study to model peatland's response to stress.

17:14: All of these activities will help inform the final report produced by the Working Group, which will be delivered to the First Nation Partner Chiefs and the Minister on July 20th, 2027.

17:24: The final report will also be posted publicly following the comment period on the draft report, which you are all welcome to participate in.

18:03: Now, for our question and discussion period, we are going to do something different today and use an interactive whiteboard to hopefully get some input from you and discuss how you feel about development in the Ring of Fire area and this regional assessment, as well as how we can better conduct our engagement.

18:10: Si vous préférez participer en français, nous avons également un tableau en français pour vos commentaires.

18:31: That is all we have to share for today.

18:33: Thank you all for coming and participating in this session.

18:36: As always, you can contact us using the information shared here to ask questions or share your thoughts.

18:41: Thank you, merci, et bonsoir.