



Impact Assessment
Agency of Canada

Agence d'évaluation
d'impact du Canada

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Dr. Kelley Blanchette
Assistant Deputy Minister
Lands and Economic Development
Indigenous Services Canada
kelley.blanchette@canada.ca

December 3, 2020

Dear Dr. Blanchette:

On July 29, 2020, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (the Minister) received a Request for a Regional Assessment of the St. Lawrence River under Subsection 97(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA). The purpose of this letter is to inform your organization of the Minister's response, and to seek your input and participation in a planned engagement process to determine whether, and if so how, to proceed with such an assessment.

The Request

On July 29, 2020, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) submitted a Request for a Regional Assessment of a portion of the St. Lawrence River, in an area ranging generally from Montreal to Quebec City. In its request, MCK describes how the expansion of shipping activity within the river and associated large-scale infrastructure development in the area has affected the region's environment, including their ability to exercise their rights to hunt, fish and gather plants, and their stewardship responsibilities. They submit that this increased industrialization has limited access to portions of the river, degraded habitat and water quality, and introduced invasive species.

The MCK have suggested that a regional assessment is required to understand the current state of the river, as well as to address the cumulative effects of current and future projects in a regional context. They have proposed a regional assessment focused on Lake Sturgeon as a keystone species, with "setting thresholds and standard mitigation" as key outcomes.

The request received from the MCK is available on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (CIAR) at: <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/document/135682>

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Minister's Response

Upon receipt of the request, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) initiated a review, taking into consideration the principles laid out in applicable guidance related to requesting such an assessment. Following careful consideration and analysis of the request and several letters of support from Indigenous peoples and stakeholder organizations, preliminary discussions with key organizations, and other available and applicable information, the Minister has determined that there are potential merits of conducting such a regional assessment. It has also been determined that further analysis and engagement is required before a decision is made to move forward with a regional assessment. The Minister's response to the request, with reasons, is available on the CIAR at: <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80913>.

As directed by the Minister, the Agency is initiating an engagement process with MCK, the Province of Quebec and other parties to explore this further, including the potential nature, scope, objectives and outcomes of such an assessment, to help inform future decision-making about whether, and if so how, to move forward with it. The Agency will provide the Minister with the results of these discussions by Spring 2021.

Request for Input

If you are interested in this potential regional assessment and would like to meet with us, please contact the Agency (contact information provided below). Also, please let us know if you would like to be notified of upcoming workshops and meetings as part of the engagement process.

Important Note: All records produced, collected or received in relation to the regional assessment request process – unless prohibited under the *Access to Information Act* or *Privacy Act* – will be considered public and may be released. Should you wish to provide any comments or documents that contain confidential or sensitive information that you believe should be protected from release to the public, please contact the Agency before submitting the information. Information marked as confidential will not be accepted without prior contact made with the Agency.

If you have any questions regarding this request for regional assessment or wish to participate in the engagement process outlined above, please contact Dr. Steve Bonnell, Manager - Strategic and Regional Assessments, by email at *Stephen.Bonnell@canada.ca* or by telephone at (709) 682-4192. Thank you in advance for your participation and input.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Terence Hubbard

cc : Mr. Luc Dumont, Regional Director General – Quebec, Indigenous Services
Canada

