



Impact Assessment
Agency of Canada

Ontario Region
600-55 York Street
Toronto ON M5J 1R7

Agence d'évaluation
d'impact du Canada

Région de l'Ontario
600-55 rue York
Toronto ON M5J 1R7

February 21, 2023

Sent by Email

Chief Cornelius Wabasse
Webequie First Nation
P.O. Box 268
Webequie ON P0T 3A0
<Email address removed>

Dear Chief Cornelius Wabasse:

Subject: Next Steps for the Northern Road Link Project and an Invitation to Participate in the Review of the Summary of the Initial Project Description – Request for Comments by March 23, 2023

On February 2, 2023, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) received an Initial Project Description for the Northern Road Link Project (the Project). The Agency determined that the Project, as described in the Initial Project Description, meets the definition of a designated project under the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) and the Initial Project Description meets the requirements of Schedule 1 of the *Information and Management of Time Limits Regulations* under the *Impact Assessment Act*.

This letter is to:

- inform you of the Agency's acceptance of the Initial Project Description and of the next steps for the impact assessment process;
- share the Agency's preliminary list of Indigenous communities for engagement on the Project;
- invite your community to provide comments by March 23, 2023, on the potential effects of the Project;
- offer an initial grant of \$5,000 to support your community's review of the Summary of the Initial Project Description, as a potentially impacted community; and
- provide information on the next steps of the impact assessment process and future grant funding opportunities to support your community's participation as a potentially impacted community.

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Next Steps

The Agency will conduct a 30-day comment period from February 21, 2023, to March 23, 2023, on the Initial Project Description, to provide an opportunity for Indigenous communities, the public, provincial ministries, municipalities, and federal authorities to identify the issues in relation to the proposed project that may be of relevance or concern to them. All submissions received during the comment period will be posted on the Agency's Registry page (the Registry) for the Project.

Comments received by March 23, 2023, will inform the development of a Summary of Issues prepared by the Agency, which includes the issues raised by Indigenous communities and other participants. The Agency will provide the Summary of Issues to you and post a copy to the Registry. As part of the Detailed Project Description, you will be required to provide a response to each issue in the Summary of Issues, explaining how you intend to address the issue.

The Summary of Issues and your responses in the Detailed Project Description will be used to inform the Agency's decision of whether to require an impact assessment for the Project, along with consideration of the factors outlined in subsection 16(2) of the IAA. The responses will inform the development of the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines, should the Agency decide that an impact assessment is required.

The Agency provides proponents 30 days, following the distribution of the Summary of Issues, to prepare and submit the Detailed Project Description and Response to the Summary of Issues. The Agency encourages proponents to begin preparation of the Detailed Project Description as early as possible.

The Agency expects Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation, as the Proponent, to engage with potentially impacted Indigenous communities in the preparation of the Detailed Project Description. To support your engagement activities, the Agency has attached a preliminary list of Indigenous communities for engagement (Enclosure 1). If you require additional time to engage with Indigenous communities and gather information to prepare the Detailed Project Description and the Response to the Summary of Issues, please notify the Agency with a written request that the Agency suspend the time limit until the required information is provided.

For further information on preparing the Detailed Project Description, please see the Guide to Preparing an Initial Project Description and a Detailed Project Description on the Agency's website at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/policy-guidance/practitioners-guide-impact-assessment-act/guide-preparing-project-description-detailed-project-description.html>.

If a federal impact assessment is required, the Agency will lead consultation efforts on behalf of the Government of Canada, to foster a meaningful and responsive two-way dialogue between each potentially impacted community and the Agency, in respect of the Project and any potential impacts the Project may have on the exercise of Aboriginal and/or treaty rights.

Request for Comments by March 23, 2023

The Agency is seeking your views, from the perspective of a potentially impacted community, on the potential effects of the Project to inform the Agency's development of the Summary of Issues, and its decision as to whether this Project requires an impact assessment. **Comments from your community are requested by March 23, 2023.**

If an impact assessment is required, your comments would also inform the preparation of draft Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines and draft planning documents, such as an Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan for the impact assessment process.

The Agency is seeking your community's initial views on the following items:

- Any environmental effects and impacts of the Project that are of concern to your community including any anticipated effects and additional impacts that are not listed in the Summary of the Initial Project Description.
- How the Project and associated effects could result in positive or negative changes to your community's:
 - health conditions (such as country foods, drinking water, air quality, drugs and/or alcohol misuse, mental health and wellbeing);
 - economic conditions (for example economic development, access to jobs, cost of living, access to housing, access to public services, community safety, recreational activities);
 - social conditions (such as community safety, food security, education, local housing, access to services and resources);
 - physical and cultural heritage (for example ceremonial sites, burial sites, cultural landscapes);
 - current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes (such as hunting, fishing, trapping); and,

- structures, sites, or things of historical, archaeological, paleontological or architectural significance (for example artifacts, important historical buildings or symbols).
- Any potential impacts of the Project on your community's exercise of Aboriginal and/or treaty rights as protected under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. A map of the Project from the Initial Project Description (Enclosure 2) is attached to this letter to help you identify any potential impacts that are relative to the location of the Project.
- Preferences and expectations of both Agency consultation activities and Proponent engagement activities in relation to the Project.

Comments, including letters, on the Project can be provided to the Agency via the *Submit a Comment* feature available on the Project's Registry page (Reference #84331 at <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/84331?culture=en-CA>), or submitted by email to NorthernRoad-RouteDuNord@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

Confidentiality

Information submitted to the Agency to inform this project assessment process may be posted online to the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (Reference # 84331) subject to certain exceptions related to privacy, security or confidentiality. The Agency's Submission Policy (<https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/participation/conditions>) describes what submitted information can be shared publicly, and what should remain private. For more information on how we protect your privacy, please refer to the Privacy Notice (<https://www.iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/protection?culture=en-CA>).

Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence is protected from disclosure under section 119 of the IAA, except if written consent is provided, or if the information is publicly available. In addition, Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence could be shared with certain parties if disclosure is necessary for procedural fairness and natural justice or for use in legal proceedings. This ensures that interested persons have a fair opportunity to participate in processes that would likely affect their interests, and that they have access to all necessary information and evidence relied on by the decision-maker.

Should you wish to provide any comments or documents that contain confidential or sensitive information that should be protected from release to the public, please contact Caitlin Cafaro at *NorthernRoad-RouteDuNord@iaac-aeic.gc.ca* **before** submitting the information. This will ensure that your submission is handled appropriately. Note, the Agency will consult with you prior to disclosing Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence under an exception.

Participant Funding Program Grants

To support your community's participation (as a potentially impacted community, not as a proponent) during the planning phase, the Agency is able to offer your community \$5,000. Please respond to *NorthernRoad-RouteDuNord@iaac-aeic.gc.ca* to confirm your interest in this grant funding opportunity, and the Agency's Funding Programs will follow up with you.

If a federal impact assessment is required, another grant of **\$5,000.00** will be offered to support your community's involvement in the development of the Agency's Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines and the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan. The Agency will also offer additional funding throughout subsequent phases of the impact assessment to support Webequie First Nation's continued participation. More information on the Agency's Funding Programs and the federal impact assessment process can be found on the Agency's website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/public-participation/funding-programs.html>

An overview of eligible activities and expenses is enclosed (Enclosure 3). If your community would like to use this funding, please contact *fp-paf@iaac-aeic.gc.ca*.

If your community accepts any grant, then as the Proponent of the Project, community leadership is expected to avoid any perceived conflicts of interest in its conduct, or the conduct of its service providers, in relation to the use of the participant funding.

Contacting the Agency

The Agency will contact you to confirm your receipt of this letter and to discuss your interest in a meeting on the Project, as a potentially impacted community, during the comment period on the Summary of the Initial Project Description. In the meantime, if you have questions, you may reach me at *NorthernRoad-RouteDuNord@iaac-aeic.gc.ca*.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Ely Weisbrot
Project Manager, Ontario Region

Enclosures (3):

- Enclosure 1: Preliminary List of Indigenous Communities for Proponent Engagement on the Northern Road Link Project
- Enclosure 2: Project Location Map – Northern Road Link Project
- Enclosure 3: Overview of Eligible Expenses and Activities

c.c.: Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation