

Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area Engagement Activities and Participant Funding Available

November 12, 2020 — The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has determined that a regional assessment will be conducted in an area centred on the Ring of Fire mineral deposits in northern Ontario.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) is inviting the public, Indigenous communities, and organizations to provide input to support the planning of the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire area. Participants may provide their input to the Agency in either official language **until January 21, 2021**. Participants are encouraged to refer to the Ring of Fire regional assessment planning information sheet for additional details.

Participants can visit the project home page on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (reference number 80468) for more options to submit information. All input received will be published to the Registry as part of the regional assessment file.

The Agency recognizes that it is more challenging to undertake meaningful public engagement and Indigenous consultation in light of the circumstances arising from COVID-19. The Agency continues to assess the situation with key stakeholders, make adjustments to engagement activities, and is providing flexibility as needed in order to prioritize the health and safety of all Canadians, while maintaining its duty to conduct meaningful engagement with interested groups and individuals.

Virtual Information Sessions

The Agency will host virtual information sessions to provide background information on the regional assessment and to help participants understand how to provide information that will contribute to the design of the process and development of the terms of reference for the assessment. The virtual sessions will consist of a presentation on the anticipated regional assessment process, information on future opportunities for participation, and an opportunity to ask questions to Agency staff.

The virtual information sessions will take place at **2 p.m. and 7 p.m. (EST) on November 24, 2020 and November 26, 2020**. For information on how to attend these sessions, please contact the Agency at iaac.regionalrof-cdfregionale.aeic@canada.ca.

Participant Funding Available

The Agency is making funding available through its Participant Funding Program to assist the public, Indigenous communities, and organizations with their participation in the regional assessment. Funding will assist recipients in providing input related to the planning of the regional assessment, reviewing and providing comments on the terms of reference and potential draft agreement for the Regional Assessment Committee, and participating in early engagement activities of the Committee. Additional participant funding will be offered at a later date to support recipients in activities throughout the conduct of the assessment.

Applications received **by December 14, 2020** will be considered. To apply for funding, complete the Regional Assessment Participant Funding Application Form available on the Agency's website at canada.ca/iaac under Funding Programs. For more information, contact the Participant Funding Program by writing to iaac.FP-PAF.aeic@canada.ca, or by calling 1-866-582-1884.

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What is the Regional Assessment?

Regional assessments are studies conducted in areas of existing projects or anticipated development to inform planning and management of cumulative effects and inform future project impact assessments. The regional assessment will be conducted in the area centered on the Ring of Fire mineral deposits in northern Ontario, approximately 540 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay and 1,000 kilometres north of Toronto. In planning the regional assessment, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada will work with the Province of Ontario, Indigenous groups, federal authorities, non-government organizations and the public to determine the appropriate activities, outcomes and boundaries of the regional assessment. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change will consider these factors in setting the terms of reference for the conduct of the regional assessment.



Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay

The impacts of waterway diversions in the Matawa region were raised during Treaties Recognition Week on the Matawa First Nations Facebook page.

Waterway diversion education important for youth

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Marten Falls Councillor Sam Achneepineskum recently stressed the importance of sharing information about the impacts of waterway diversions from the Albany River system with upcoming generations of youth.

"It's important for our young people to learn their history," Achneepineskum says. "I think they should look at their history and how they were impacted by the coming of the fur trade and the people who are encroaching ever so closer all the time."

Achneepineskum says everything on the land had a name and a story about it.

"We don't want to forget that," Achneepineskum says. "If we have our history and our stories for these rivers and the land, then they remain ours, they remain a part of us, but if we lose that we don't have anything. That's why it is important to learn that and to keep it alive

and for our young people to learn it."

Achneepineskum says many of the communities have done research and completed land-use plans over the years.

"A lot of them have their sacred sites and names of rivers," Achneepineskum says. "The Elders are disappearing, those people that lived on those rivers. Their whole life was living on the river and the land."

The waterway diversions involved three projects, one from the Kenogami River, one from the Ogoki River and one from Lake St. Joseph. The Long Lake diversion project was built in the late 1930s with the construction of the Kenogami Lake Dam and Long Lake Diversion Dam to divert water through Long Lake and the Aguasabon River to Lake Superior. The Ogoki River diversion project was built in the early 1940s with the construction of the Waboose Dam and Summit Dam to divert water through Lake Nipigon to Lake Superior.

The Kenogami and Ogoki Rivers are tributaries of the Albany River. The Lake St. Joseph diversion project was built in the late 1950s to divert water from Lake St. Joseph, which drains into the Albany River, to Lac Seul, which drains through the English River system into Lake Winnipeg.

"When they built the (Ogoki River diversion project), they told people it would help the industry and that was our contribution to the war effort," Achneepineskum says.

Achneepineskum says the waterway diversions have since impacted the environment in the rivers as well as travel during certain seasons.

"In the summertime the water would be really dry," Achneepineskum says. "It made it difficult to travel, especially when people started using outboard (motors)."

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Community

Waterways a part of history

TREATIES RECOGNITION WEEK **Matawa** FIRST NATIONS

James Bay Treaty # 9

The Ogoki and Long Lac Water Diversions

In order to help generate hydro and raise the water levels of the Great Lakes for shipping and transport, as well as the extraction of lumber from Northern Ontario, the Ogoki and Long Lac Water Diversions were major historic water projects in the interests of Canada, Ontario and the United States of America.

The people of Matawa First Nations and James Bay Treaty # 9 have made significant resource and economic contribution from our territory.

MAP SOURCE AND FOR MORE INFORMATION: [HTTPS://LINK.SPRINGER.COM/CHAPTER/10.5822/978-1-61091-993-7_7](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.5822/978-1-61091-993-7_7)

Based on original from Department of Geography, University of Waterloo

graphic from Matawa Facebook page

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Achneepineskum says the researchers looked at how supplies used to be transported on the rivers by York boats while looking into the height of water levels before the water diversions.

“They would ship stuff from Fort Albany — they would go up the Albany River to Lake St. Joseph,” Achneepineskum says. “They had a post at Marten Falls, they had a post at Lake St. Joseph and they had a post just

near the Albany Forks and they had one at Mammamattawa, English River Post.”

Achneepineskum says government officials also looked at developing more waterway diversion projects in the 1960s on the rivers across northern Ontario.

“Our community would have been a lake where it is now — we would have been underwater,” Achneepineskum says. “I think that is part of the reason why Nishnawbe Aski Nation came to be, all the chiefs got

together and they started to push back on trying to kill that project. It was called Damn the Dams.”

The Long Lake and Ogoki River water diversion projects increased the water levels and hydroelectricity output on the Great Lakes.

“What’s kind of ironic about it is now that they’ve diverted all our water south, now they’re sending us water bottles up north,” Achneepineskum says.

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