



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

May 15, 2020

Sent by email

Sarah Beamish
Beamish Law
901 King Street West
Suite 400, East Tower
Toronto, ON M5V 3H5
<Email address removed>

Dear Sarah Beamish:

Subject: Status of the Marten Falls Community Access Road Project and Webequie Supply Road Project Impact Assessments during the Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

Thank you for your letter dated April 8, 2020, on behalf of Fort Albany First Nation regarding the community's concerns about consultation and engagement activities for the impact assessment processes of the Marten Falls Community Access Road and the Webequie Supply Road Projects (the Projects) during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) appreciates your overview of the current obstacles that Fort Albany First Nation faces and acknowledges your view that COVID-19 precautions limits Fort Albany First Nation's ability to meaningfully participate in engagement and consultation processes related to the Projects.

The Agency is committed to substantive, meaningful, and respectful consultation conduct throughout the impact assessment processes for the Projects. As the federal Crown consultation lead, the Agency is responsible for coordinating Crown consultations from the planning phase to the issuance of the Decision Statement. The Agency does not delegate its Duty to Consult. The Agency does not have any upcoming consultation activities planned for the Projects at this time. Below are the Agency's current commitments respecting COVID-19 considerations at this time:

- The Agency is currently following [guidelines](#)¹ that have been issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada and local health authorities;

.../2

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents.html>



- The Agency has halted in-person and in-community meetings; when a meeting is unavoidable during the current circumstance, we will conduct those activities through digital communications including: teleconference calls and WebEx as appropriate and to the preference of Indigenous groups to discuss projects;
- The Agency remains flexible and able to adapt our conduct as necessary to prioritize the health and safety of communities participating in impact assessments;
- The Agency continues to be in touch with proponents to understand how projects are affected by COVID-19; and
- The Agency will provide updates to Indigenous groups about the status of projects at regular intervals.

Proponent Engagement Activities

The Agency expects the proponents to give consideration to culturally appropriate, gender sensitive, and trauma-informed and healing centered engagement methods and approaches. Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation should plan their engagement activities in consideration of the current circumstances, including the Government of Canada's advice to all Canadians to implement social distancing measures and avoid close contact with others to minimize COVID-19 transmission in communities.

Federal and Provincial Coordination

The Agency acknowledges your request that the Province of Ontario and the Agency develop a coordinated position on adaptations to the environmental assessment and impact assessment processes in consideration of the COVID-19 situation. At this time, the Agency shares information with the Province of Ontario about its current commitments in relation to COVID-19 but does not have a coordinated position with Ontario regarding COVID-19 specific adaptations. If this approach should change, the Agency will notify impacted Indigenous groups. The Agency will continue to coordinate consultation on the Projects with provincial officials to the extent possible, as outlined in the respective Cooperation Plans.

For matters related to the provincial environmental assessment, I encourage you to contact Sasha McLeod or Agni Papageorgiou, Special Project Officers, with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, at sasha.mcleod@ontario.ca or at agni.papageorgiou@ontario.ca.

For further questions regarding the Marten Falls Community Access Road Project and the Webequie Supply Road Project impact assessments, please continue to direct your correspondence to Caitlin Cafaro, Crown Consultation Coordinator at IAAC.MartenFalls.AEIC@canada.ca or IAAC.Webequie.AEIC@canada.ca.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Lorraine Cox
A/Director, Ontario Region

c.c.: Chief Leo Metatawabin, Fort Albany First Nation
Chris Metatawabin, Fort Albany First Nation
Lori Churchill, Ministry of Energy Northern Development and Mines
Kathleen O'Neill, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Annamaria Cross, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Agni Papageorgiou, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Sasha McLeod, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation
Chief Cornelius Wabasse, Webequie First Nation
Gordon Wabasse, Webequie First Nation
Qasim Saddique, Marten Falls Community Access Road Project
Michael Fox, Webequie Supply Road Project
Christine Cinnamon, AECOM
Don Parkinson, SNC Lavalin
Craig Wallace, SNC Lavalin