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July 7, 2021

Chief Cadmus Delorme
Cowessess First Nation
P.O. Box 100, Mainstreet
Cowessess, SK S0G 5L0
<email address removed>

Dear Chief Delorme:

Subject: Proposed Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Projects under the *Impact Assessment Act*

On June 18, 2021, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (the Minister) received the enclosed request to designate the proposed Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Projects (the Project) under subsection 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA).

First and foremost, I am deeply saddened to learn of the unmarked graves found recently on the grounds of the Marieval (Cowessess) Residential School and others across the country. I stand with Indigenous communities across Canada in their outrage and mourning. I hope that you and all of the members of Cowessess First Nation are keeping as safe and as well as possible.

The Proposed Project

Saskatchewan's Water Security Agency is proposing the construction and operation of three irrigation projects resulting in upwards of 202,343 hectares (500,000 acres) of irrigable land.

Phase 1 would take place to the northwest of Lake Diefenbaker to complete construction of the Westside irrigation canal system that discontinued in 1973 and is expected to provide 32,375 hectares (80,000 acres) of irrigable land.

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Phase 2 would expand the Westside irrigation canal and provide water to the edges of farmers' fields near the towns of Zealandia to the west and Asquith to the north with the expectation of adding 105,218 hectares (260,000 acres) of irrigable land. Combined, Phases 1 and 2 would include nearly 400 km of canals plus pipelines and three balancing reservoirs.

Phase 3 is the development of the Qu'Appelle South Irrigation system to the south of Lake Diefenbaker. Phase 3 would provide water for multiple uses including irrigation for up to 48,562 hectares (120,000 acres) and would include approximately 100 km of canals, a balancing reservoir, and an outfall structure into Buffalo Pound Lake. The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) understands Phase 3 is located within your Treaty area.

Enclosed with this letter is a project map from the Water Security Agency website. Additional publically available information can be accessed on the Project's website at the following link: <https://www.wsask.ca/About-WSA/Lake-Diefenbaker-Irrigation-Project>.

Provincial Review

The Project may also be subject to review by the Government of Saskatchewan. For information on the provincial process, please contact Brianne England, Manager of Applications, Environmental Protection Division, Ministry of Environment at 306-787-6190 or brianne.england@gov.sk.ca.

Next Steps

Based on the information available to the Agency, Phases 1 and 2 as proposed do not appear to be described in the *Physical Activities Regulations*. As such, and unless limitations of the authority are found to have been met, the physical activities of both Phases 1 and 2 would be considered for designation at this time. The Minister's determination, with reasons, on whether the Project is to be designated will be posted to the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry Internet site. In accordance with subsection 9(4) of IAA, it is expected that the Minister will respond, with reasons, by September 16, 2021.

Phase 3 is in its conceptual phase. Based on preliminary information available to the Agency, it is likely a designated Project as described in the *Physical Activities Regulations*. The Agency will review further information as it is available. Should Phase 3 be formally proposed and subject to the IAA, the Agency will be in contact with your Nation to be engaged in the assessment at that time.

At this time, since the Phase 3 project is likely already a designated project, it is not under further consideration as part of the Agency's analysis of this request, which will focus on Phases 1 and 2.

If you have any questions about the status or next steps, please do not hesitate to contact Greg Bosse, Project Manager, by telephone at 587-334-2941 or email greg.bosse@canada.ca.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Ian Martin, Team Lead, Prairie and Northern Regional Office

Enclosures:

- 1) Designation Request – Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations
- 2) Map of the Project – Water Security Agency