

October 16, 2024

Hon. Steven Guilbeault
Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Canada

Rachelle Lalonde
Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

Chief and Council
Attawapiskat First Nation
Attawapiskat, Canada

I am writing to express my disappointment on the decision not to extend the deadline, as I had previously asked by email and letter. The extension would have given valuable opportunities for community members to take part in the development of the first draft Terms of Reference to help guide the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire area.

As a member of the Attawapiskat First Nation, it is important to ensure that the voices and input of our community members are heard and considered. The community members living in Attawapiskat have a deep understanding and extensive knowledge of the land and the potential issues associated with proposed mineral developments, particularly based on our past experiences with De Beers Victor Mine. Our community members have historically relied on the land for sustenance and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. This fundamental aspect of our Nation will not change.

The decision made by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Canada, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, Co-Led Regional Assessment Working Group, and Chief and Council to exclude community engagement with the Attawapiskat people is regrettable and troublesome. There is a representative that was appointed by the Chief and the participation of the Chief and Council's legal counsel in the Co-Led Regional Assessment, but the absence of meaningful engagement with community members may undermine the integrity and true purpose of the Regional Assessment, providing it with only ineffective document for our community.

It is disheartening to note the substantial funding was distributed for the proposed Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire area, intended for the development of the draft Terms of Reference, community engagements, and the retention of legal and technical experts. However, the failure to facilitate a simple community engagement with the Attawapiskat people is troubling and raises concerns about the direction of this initiative. Financial constraints should not hold up the opportunity to engage with the true voices from the Kattawapiskak People.

I urge you to reconsider and prioritize and conduct meaningful community engagement to ensure that the perspectives and concerns of the Attawapiskat First Nation are fully integrated into the Regional Assessment process.

Mr. Charles Hookimaw
Community Member of Kattawapiskak
Attawapiskat, Canada