



COMMUNITY GATHERING: Land Protection and Indigenous Rights

**Hosted by Okiniwak, Legal Advocates for Nature's Defence, Here We Stand, and
the Friends of the Attawapiskat River**

March 11, 2026 | Thomas Cheechoo Jr Community Hall, Moose Factory



Legal Advocates
for Nature's Defence

Access to Justice

**Environmental
Rights**

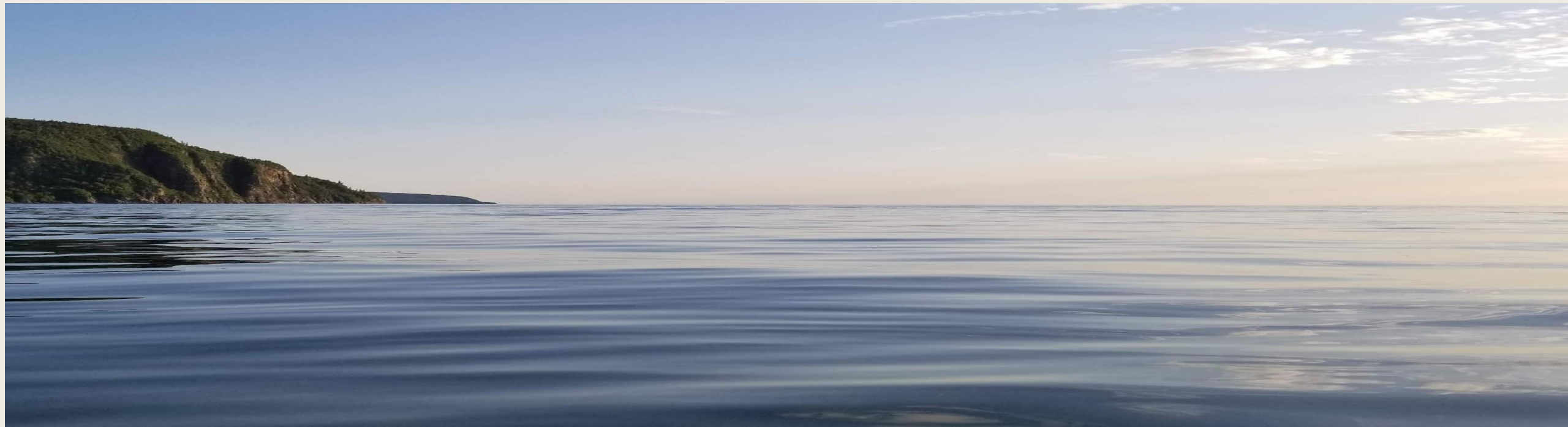
**Indigenous
Sovereignty**

An environmental law
non-profit based in
Northern Ontario

www.NaturesDefence.ca

LAND is committed to advancing access to justice and Indigenous-led conservation in Northern Ontario, to protect nature and Indigenous rights.

We are the first and only Civil Society Organization based in Northern Ontario to provide free legal services to individuals and communities most impacted by environmental injustice.



Bill 5

*Where is it now?
What are we doing?*

ONTARIO

Attawapiskat First Nation youth taking Ford's PCs to Ontario's highest court in landmark Bill 5 challenge

By Anushka Yadav - Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dec 15, 2025 - Brampton, Mississauga, Niagara

Post

CANADA'S
**NATIONAL
OBSERVER**

Young people will speak up in court after leaders stayed silent about Ontario development bill

By Sonal Gupta | News, Urban Indigenous Communities in Ottawa | Decem



NEWS

Attawapiskat organizers want to join First Nations court case against Ontario's Bill 5

Founders of the Okiniwak Indigenous youth movement and Friends of the Attawapiskat River want the justice system to recognize the value of the Breathing Lands, beyond the Ring of Fire

Bill 5 Court Challenge

- **Indigenous-led court challenge to constitutionality of Bills 5 and C-5**

Proposed interveners – Ramon Kataquapit (Okiniwak) and Michel Koostachin (Friends of the Attawapiskat River)

- **Arguments**

1 – *UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People* requires free, prior and informed consent

2 – Indigenous legal traditions must be respected



International Law

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- The UNDRIP is an international human rights instrument that sets out the collective and individual rights of Indigenous peoples and underscores the importance of self-determination.
- The rights set out in the UNDRIP represent the **“minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples around the world”**
 - **Article 19** – Governments must consult and cooperate in good faith to obtain Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)
 - **Article 29(1)** – Right to conserve and protect lands



International Law

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- **FREE** means **CONSENT** is given without coercion, pressure, or manipulation
- **PRIOR** means **CONSENT** is sought and secured before decisions or actions are taken
- **INFORMED** means **CONSENT** is based on complete, accessible, and culturally relevant information
- **CONSENT** means a decision that can be given, withheld, or withdrawn





Reclaiming Law

From the courts: Kebaowek vs CNL

*“In my opinion, Canada’s adoption of the UNDRIP into Canadian law via the UNDA must mean **more than a status quo** application of the section 35 framework”*

*“**Process rights must be considered from the perspective of the rights holding collective and must consider the customs, traditions, and laws of the Indigenous rights holders.** This ensures that consultation processes are robust and align with the spirit of reconciliation and the continuing evolution of the Canadian legal framework, which now includes the UNDRIP”*

Justice Blackhawk of the Federal Court

Kebaowek First Nation v. Canadian Nuclear Laboratories

2025 FC 319 <<https://canlii.ca/t/k9l24>>



**The many processes
affecting the proposed
Ring of Fire**

**Mineral
Exploration**
40,000+ staked claims

Impact Assessments

Northern Road Link
Webequie Supply Road
Marten Falls Community Access
Road
Eagle's Nest Mine (rejected)

**Regional
Assessment**

Bill C-5
Federal

Bill 5
Provincial

**'One Project, One
Review'**
Canada-Ontario plan



Mineral Exploration in the Proposed Ring of Fire

1. *Claim Information*
3. *Why this Matters*
4. *Debunking the Myths*
5. *Learn More and Take Action*



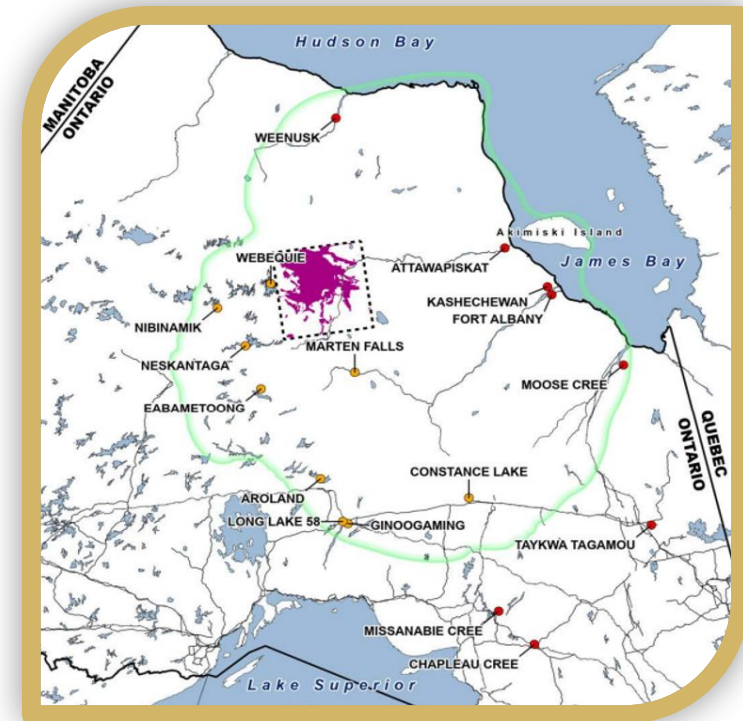
Status: There are over 42,000 claims staked in the proposed Ring of Fire.

Mineral Exploration in the Proposed Ring of Fire

As of May 2025, there are currently **42,986 mining claims** staked in the proposed Ring of Fire region in pursuit of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, and graphite.

The majority of these claims are held by two companies:

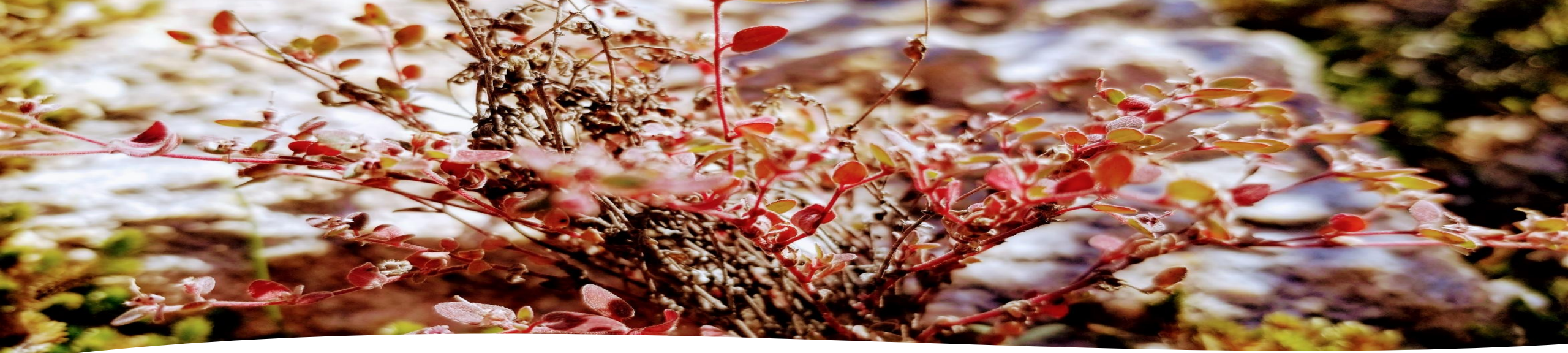
- 1. Juno Crop:** ~23,678 claims covering 498,340 hectares of land (58.6% of claims in the region)
- 2. Wyloo Metals:** ~12,999 claims covering 252,465 hectares of land (29.7% of claims in the region)





Why This Matters

- 1.** Mineral exploration in the “Ring of Fire” will directly impact the health and ability of future generations to exercise their Indigenous treaty rights, including rights to hunt, fish, and trap.
- 2.** Exploration and development would open up the region’s peatland (muskeg) complex, which to date, remains largely undisturbed.
- 3.** Exploration activities raise concerns about how Indigenous rights, including Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (“FPIC”) will be respected in decision-making.



Debunking the Myth

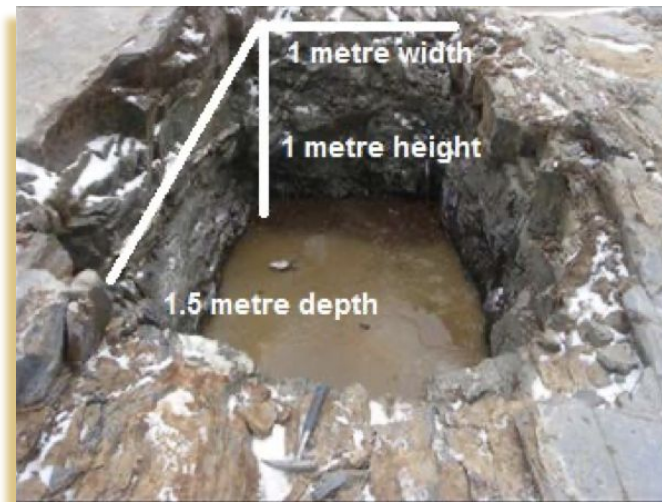
Myth:

Mineral exploration activities are low impact.

Reality:

Mineral exploration involves:

- Clearing trees and vegetation
- Geophysical surveys with generators
- Excavation of bedrock
- Drilling
- Pitting and Trenching



Province of Ontario, "Early Exploration Plan Activity Information" p 6.



Province of Ontario, "Early Exploration Plan Activity Information" p 2.



Debunking the Myth

Myth:

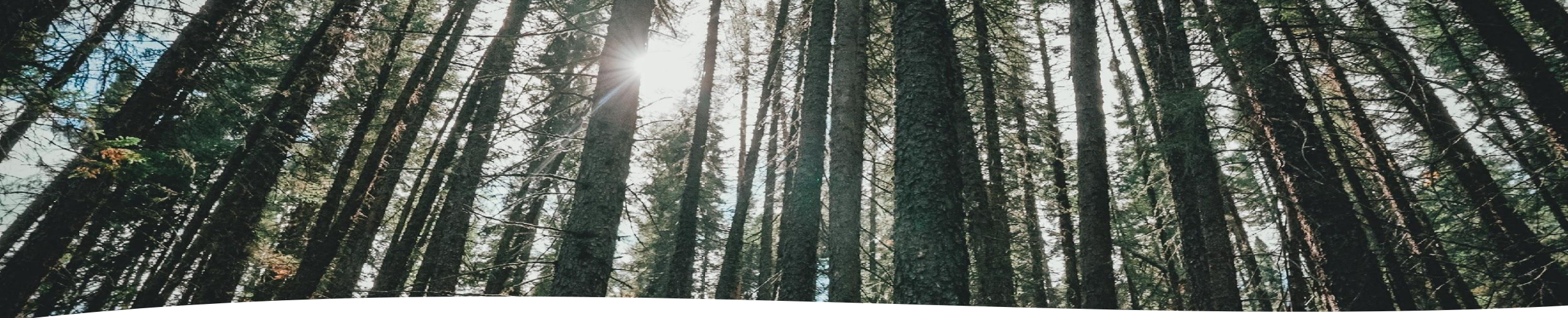
Electric vehicles (EVs) are key to solving the climate crisis— we just need more critical minerals to build them

Reality:

EVs alone cannot solve the climate crisis. Focusing on EV production ignores broader changes that are needed to reduce overall resource use and emissions ([BC Mining Law Reform](#) (p 10-12)).

Consider:

- High Mineral Intensity
- Hidden emission in EV production, such as electricity generated from fossil fuels and mining operations
- Lack of public transportation



Debunking the Myth

Myth:

We need to mine the Ring of Fire to meet the growing demand for critical minerals - there is no alternative!

Reality:

Not all critical minerals need to come from new mines. ([BC Mining Law Reform](#) (p 6-8))

Consider:

- Re-mining old sites and tailings
- Recycling and reusing E-Waste



Debunking the Myth

Myth:

Everyone benefits from mining “critical minerals”

Reality:

Mining projects often impose disproportionate environmental and social burdens on local and Indigenous communities, while the economic benefits tend to be captured by shareholders and outside industries. ([BC Mining Law Reform](#) p 17-19)

“Critical Minerals” - Critical to who?



Debunking the Myth

Myth:

We need to act fast — critical minerals can't wait

Reality:

Urgency is no reason to bypass consent and environmental safeguards.



Learn More and Take Action

1. Create an IAAC and ERO Account

Sign up with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (“IAAC”) and Environmental Registry of Ontario (“ERO”) to get involved with mineral exploration permits and activities.

2. Submit Public Comments

Provide feedback on mineral exploration permits and activities during open public comment periods.

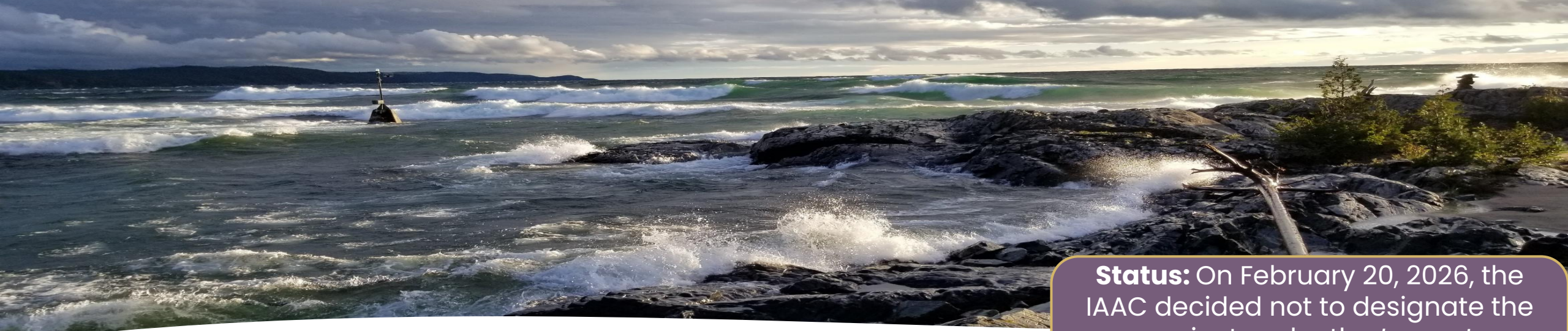
3. Register for Project Updates

Follow projects through Mineral Tracker to receive updates and notifications about mineral exploration activities.



Project Assessments in the Proposed Ring of Fire

- 1. Eagle's Nest Mine*
- 2. Webequie Supply Road Project*
- 3. Marten Falls Community Access Road*
- 4. Northern Road Link Project*
- 5. Debunking the Myths*
- 6. Learn More and Take Action*



Eagle's Nest Mine

Wyloo Ring of Fire Ltd. has proposed to **construct, operate, decommission and abandon a multi-metal underground mine** to produce and supply nickel, copper, and platinum group metals.

The proposed Eagle's Nest Mine Project is located approximately 540 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, Ontario, and 240 kilometres west of James Bay in the Ring of Fire mining area.

The project will produce approximately 3,000 tonnes of ore per day and is expected to operate for approximately **12 to 15 years**.

Status: On February 20, 2026, the IAAC decided not to designate the project under the *Impact Assessment Act*. This means it **no federal impact assessment**.



Wyloo Ring of Fire Ltd. photo taken from website.



Status: Environmental Assessment Report and Impact Statement Released January 30, 2026.

The Webequie Supply Road

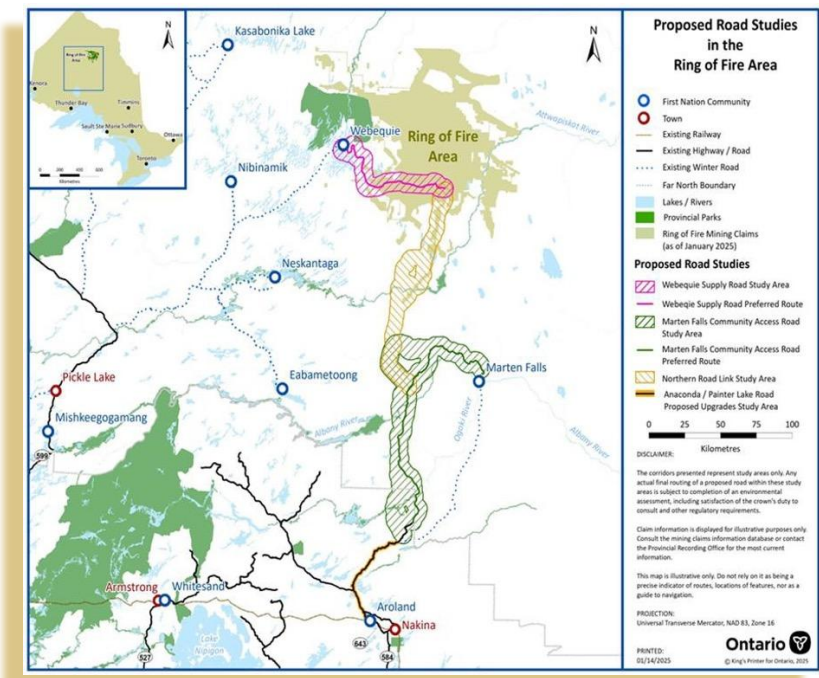
A proposed 107-kilometre, 35-meter-wide, all-season road that connects Webequie First Nation to the proposed Ring of Fire region (near McFaulds Lake).

This road is intended to support future mining activities and development in the Ring of Fire region.

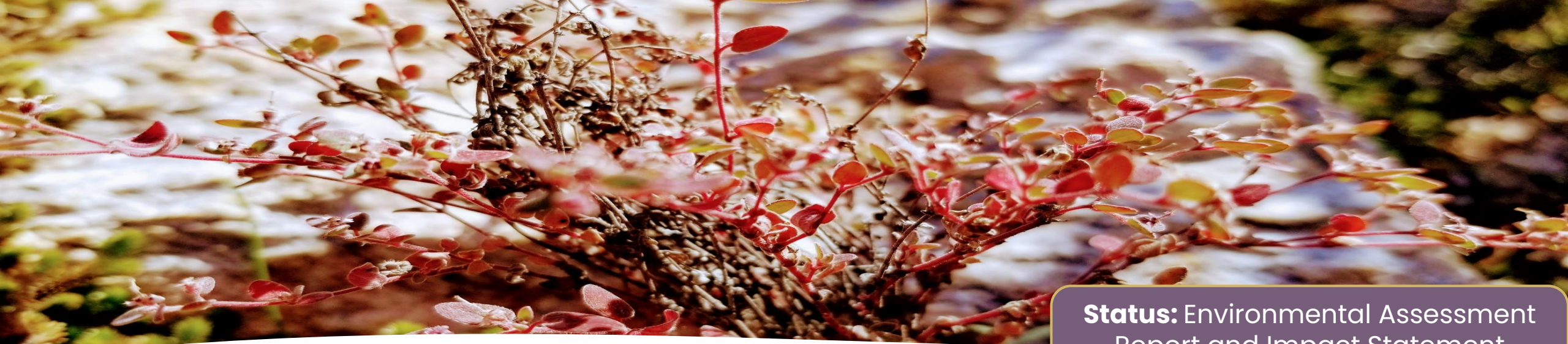
The COMMENT DEADLINE is March 20, 2026.

Submissions can be made to:

- 1. Impact Assessment Agency of Canada; and**
- 2. Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.**



Province of Ontario, "Unlocking the Ring of Fire" slide 2.



Status: Environmental Assessment Report and Impact Statement Released February 20, 2026.

The Marten Falls Community Access Road

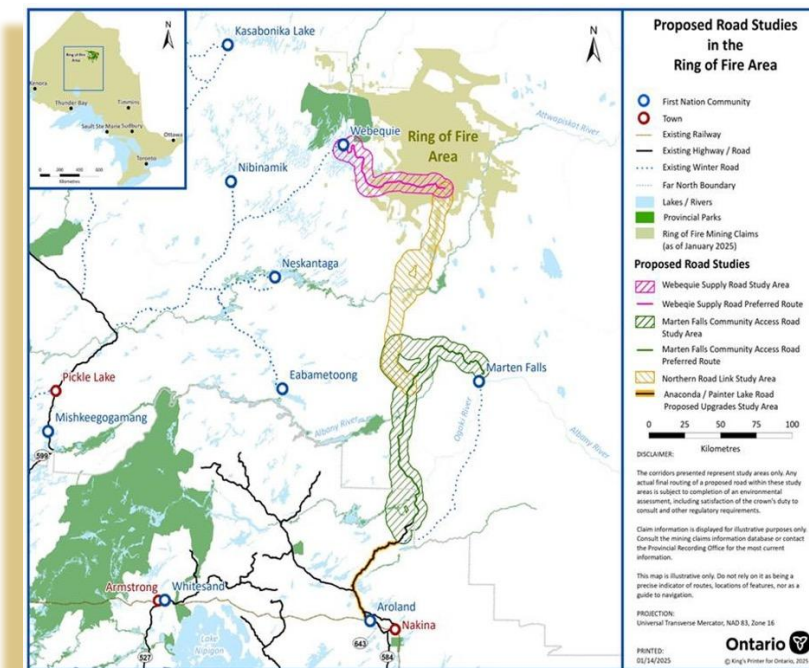
A proposed 184-kilometre, 12 to 15-meter-wide, all-season road that connects the community of Marten Falls to the provincial highway network.

This road is intended to support future mining activities and development in the Ring of Fire region.

The COMMENT DEADLINE is April 10, 2026.

Submissions can be made to:

- 1. Impact Assessment Agency of Canada; and**
- 2. Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.**





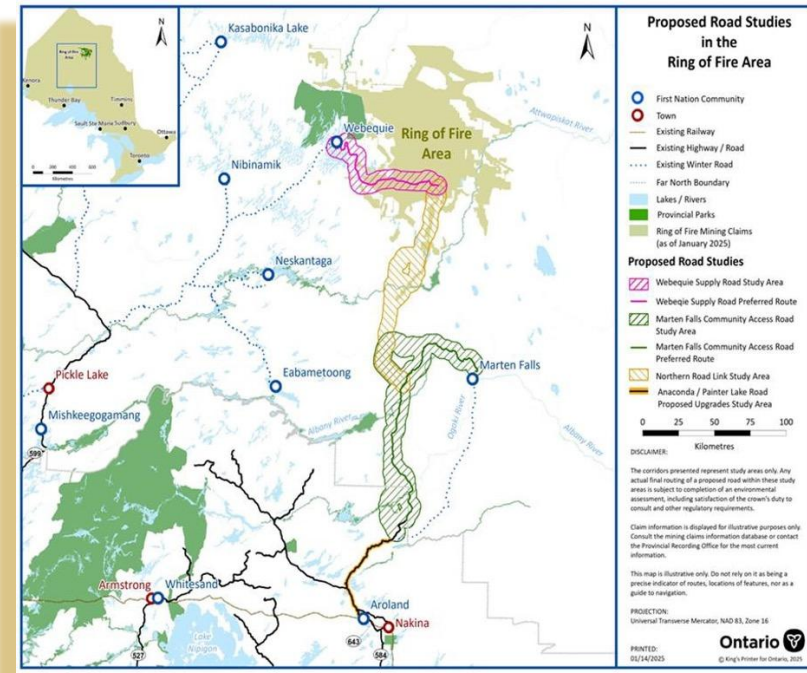
Status: Environmental Assessment Report and Impact Statement pending release

The Northern Road Link Project

A proposed 117 to 164-kilometre all-season road that connects the Marten Falls Community Access Road to the Webequie Supply Road.

This road is intended to provide a transportation route to the mining activities in the Ring of Fire region.

You can register with the IAAC to receive updates on these road projects be notified when the Environmental Assessment Report and Impact Statement for this project are released.



Province of Ontario, "Unlocking the Ring of Fire" slide 2.

Status: The Ontario Government wants these roads constructed as early as **November 2030–2031**.

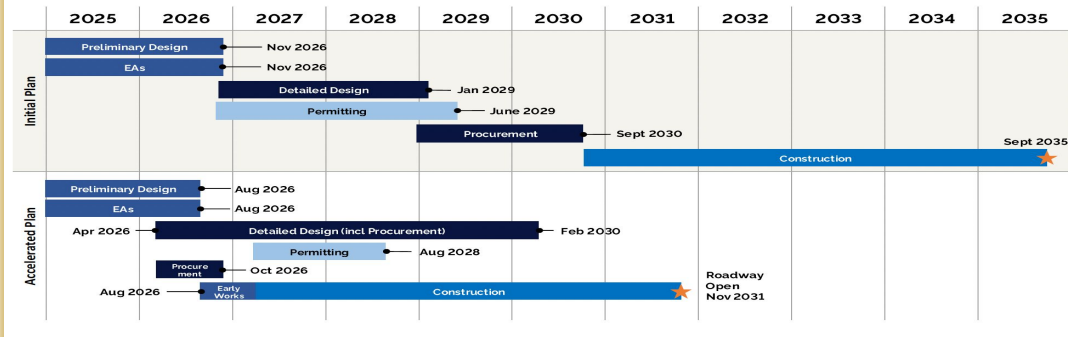
Ontario's "Accelerated Plan"

The Ontario government recently announced a plan to accelerate construction of the three proposed roads to the proposed Ring of Fire by **up to five years**.

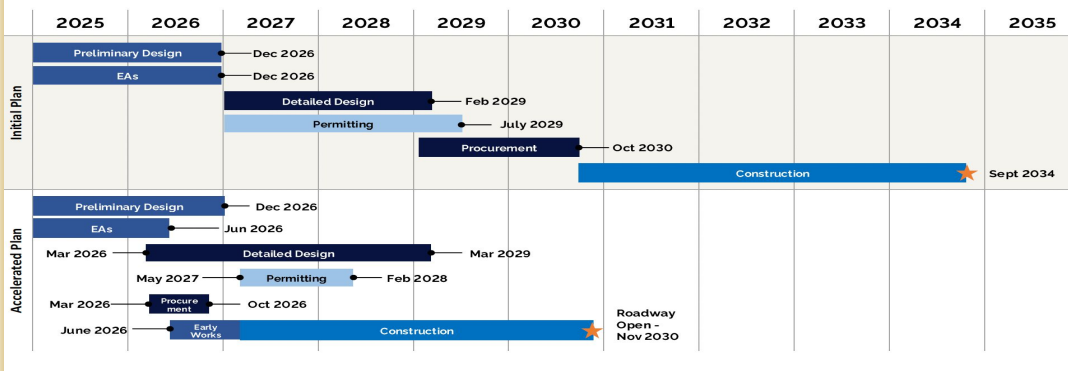
Under this plan, construction could begin as early as June 2026, with parts of the road network being completed around November 2030 and November 2031.

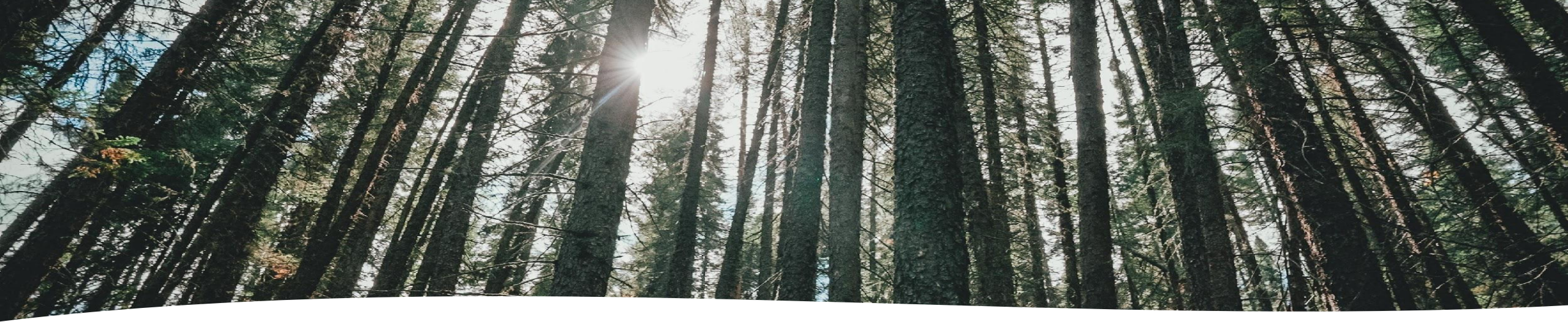
The accelerated construction timelines raises concerns that Indigenous rights and environmental protections may not be fully respected or considered in order to fast-track development.

Accelerated timelines: Marten Falls Community Access Road



Accelerated timelines: Webeque Supply Road





Debunking the Myths

Myth:

These roads are just for community access.

Reality:

While these roads are being framed as “community access roads,” they are also intended to enable large-scale mining development in the proposed Ring of Fire region.

“Our government plans to accelerate construction of more than 500 kilometres of all-season roads leading to the Ring of Fire so we can unlock Ontario’s full economic potential [...]”

– Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation
March 02, 2026



Debunking the Myths

Myth:

Roads have minimal environmental impact.

Reality:

Constructing these roads **require clearing trees and vegetation**, affecting wildlife and surrounding ecosystems. These routes risk disrupting **sensitive wetlands and peatlands** in the Hudson-James Bay Lowlands – one of the world's largest carbon-storing ecosystems.

“There are risks that increased mining activities will result in **negative impacts on climate, the environment, and biodiversity**. Specifically, damages to Canada’s globally significant carbon sinks, such as forests, wetlands, and peatlands, could **release additional carbon and eliminate or reduce their potential to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.**”

– Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2024



Debunking the Myths

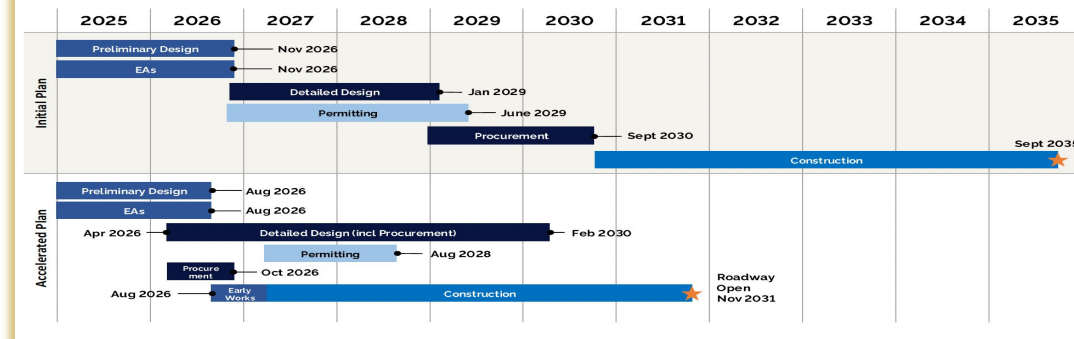
Myth:

Development in the proposed Ring of Fire is being carefully planned first.

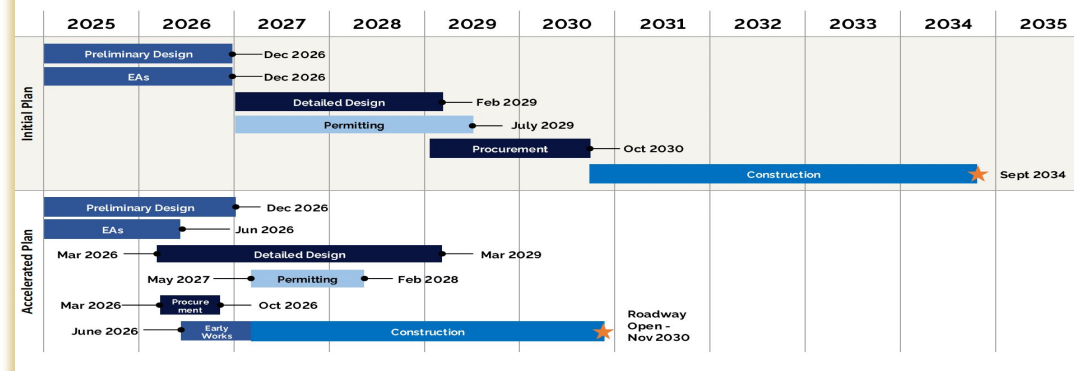
Reality:

- These major road projects are moving forward before completion of the Regional Assessment – an assessment designed to understand the broader environmental, social, and economic effects of development in the proposed Ring of Fire region.
- Ontario developed an “accelerated plan” to begin road construction as early as June 2026.

Accelerated timelines: Marten Falls Community Access Road



Accelerated timelines: Webeque Supply Road





Learn More and Take Action

1. Create an IAAC Account

Sign up for an account with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to participate in project review processes.

2. Submit Public Comments

Provide feedback on environmental and impact assessments during public comment periods.

3. Register for Project Updates

Register on the IAAC project page to receive updates and notifications about key projects and consultation opportunities.

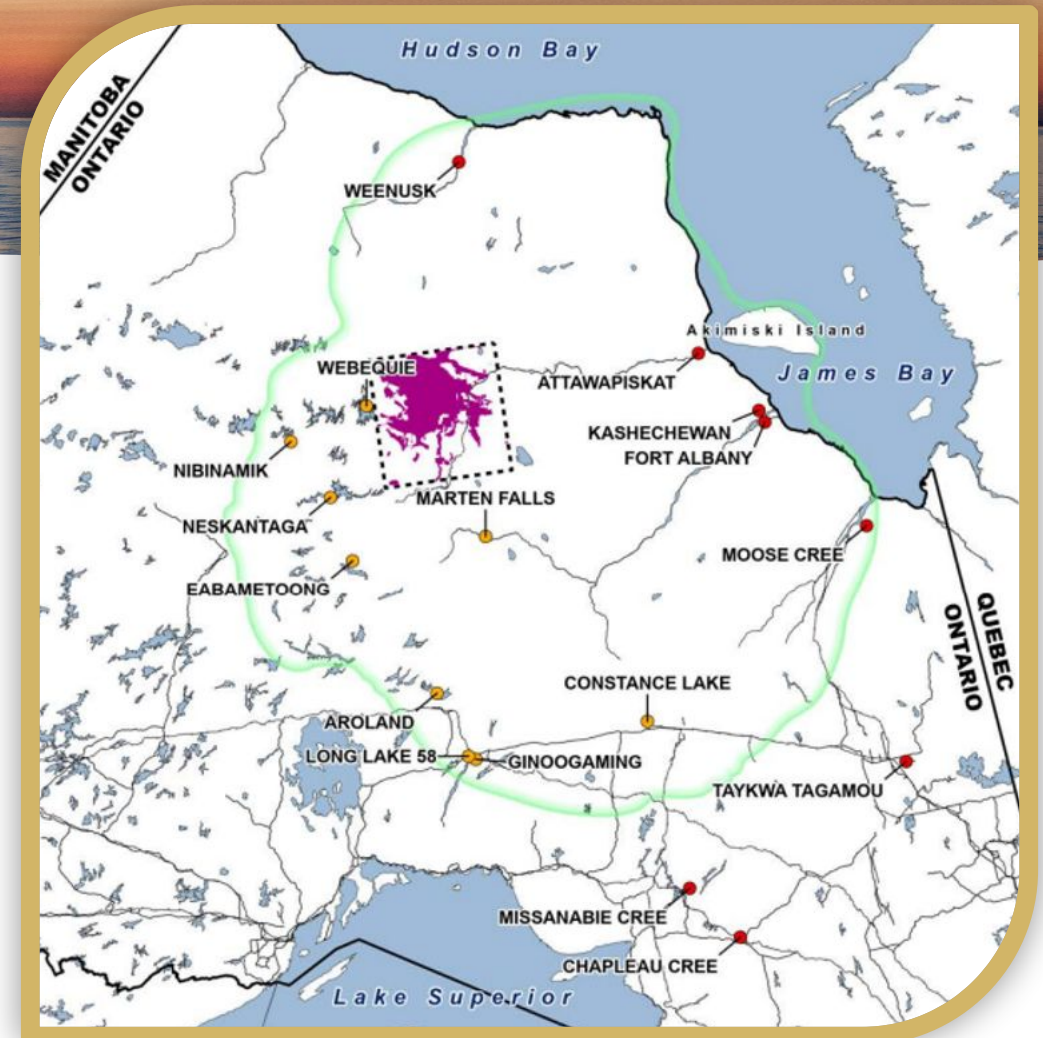


The Regional Assessment

- 1. About the Regional Assessment (RA)*
- 2. Current status of the RA*
- 3. Key things to know*
- 4. Learn more and take action*

About the RA

- A study of the **cumulative environmental, social, health, cultural and economic impacts** of resource development in a specific geographic region
- Will **inform (not replace)** future assessments for projects in the region
- For the proposed **Ring of Fire** (the name given by mining companies to a mineral rich area in Treaty 9 territory) and the **surrounding area**





Current status: in the Conduct Phase

- “**Co-led**” process by the Regional Assessment Working Group (with representatives from IAAC and 15 First Nation Partners)
- Began in **January 2025**, should be complete by **July 2027**
- Interim (progress) report released in **January 2026**

Aroland	Attawapiskat
Constance Lake	Eabametoong
Fort Albany	Ginoogaming
Kashechewan Cree	Long Lake #58
Marten Falls	Missanabie Cree
Moose Cree	Neskantaga
Nibinamik	Webequie
Weenusk	

Key takeaways from interim report: resource development can only be considered if:

- Urgent crises (access to health and social services, housing, clean water, etc.) are immediately addressed
- Protections are in place for the peatlands
- Inherent and Treaty rights are upheld and Indigenous values and knowledge are respected
- Improves community wellbeing and safety (MMIWG)



Current status: in the Conduct Phase

- Interim (progress) report highlighted concerns about an '**accelerated development scenario**' that should be avoided (p 68):

"The accelerated development scenario represents conditions where **high external demand drives rapid project proposals**, infrastructure expansion, and exploration activity across the region. **With limited Indigenous governance, development proceeds under existing Crown regulatory structures** with procedural consultation but limited shared decision-making, and on an expedited timeline. **Industrial footprints expand quickly**, and access corridors are developed primarily to facilitate mineral extraction. **Community benefits are uneven** (in part due to the difficulty of developing Indigenous ability to take advantage" within tight timeframes) with **high benefit leakage away from local and Indigenous communities**, and **Indigenous stewardship priorities struggle to keep pace with development pressures.**"



Key things to know

- **Resource development can** continue while the RA is being conducted
- **Flawed “co-led” process** (not Indigenous-led or consent based)
- **Not binding** on decision-makers
- **Federal process** – Ontario is not involved
- **Will not help Canada** meet its climate change or biodiversity commitments



Key things to know

The RA is meant to be an open, transparent and community-focused process.

8.2. *First Nation Partner Communities*

- The Regional Assessment must be community-focused and include mechanisms for community dialogue and meaningful involvement of First Nation Partner community members living on their traditional territory or elsewhere. The Regional Assessment will be reflective of the different potential positive and negative effects that development activities may have on each First Nation Partner community.
- Communications in First Nation communities must be accessible to speakers of Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree, and materials used for the conduct of the Regional Assessment must be presented in a format which is appropriate for the audience and substance of the information being communicated (e.g., oral, video, written).

Key things to know

Each First Nation Partner has a delegate – have you been contacted by yours?

As an Indigenous rights holder, you have rights to:

- **Notice** of upcoming engagement opportunities
- **Disclosure of information** to understand impacts to your rights and interests
- **Frequent and accessible participation opportunities** to share perspectives and have your concerns heard and addressed
- **Capacity support** (translation services, etc.) to meaningfully participate
- **An open line of communication** between you and your delegate

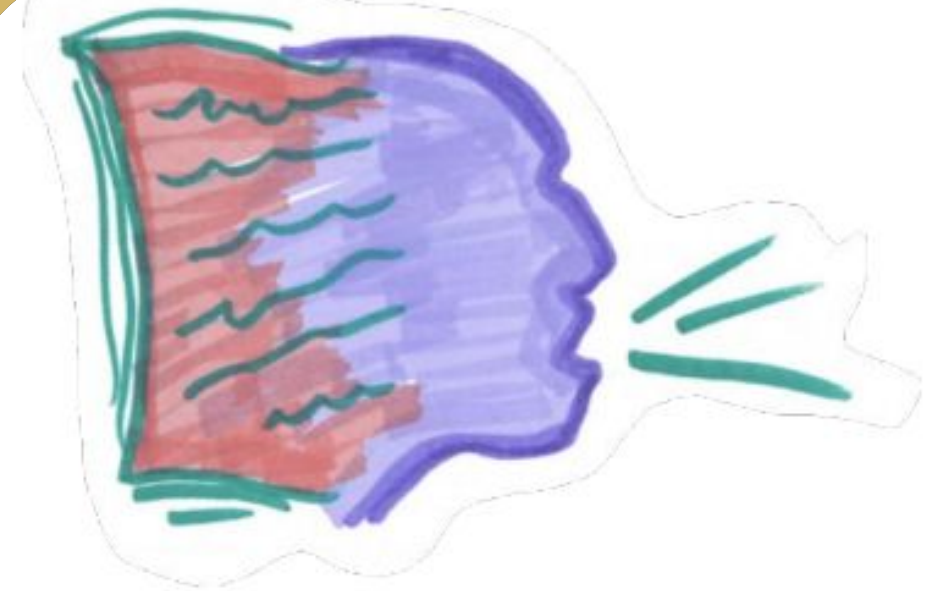


Image 7. Illustration of the role of delegates bringing key information about the Regional Assessment to and from community members.

IAAC, p 21 of RA Interim Report



Learn more

- Read our blog: *'The Regional Assessment for the proposed Ring of Fire has begun – here's what you need to know'*
- Review our Ring of Fire Fact Sheet

Take action

- Add your name to the Friends' protection declaration
- Use our draft letter to express your interest to be involved in the RA
- Contact the IAAC at anytime with questions, comments or concerns about the RA: **regionalrof-cdfregionale@iaac-aeic.gc.ca**

Get to know...

THE RING OF FIRE



What's at stake

The "Ring of Fire" is the name mining companies have given to a sizable mineral deposit located in Treaty 9. With a proposed lifespan of over **100 years**, the mining development will have direct impact on the health of nature and ability of current and future generations to exercise Treaty rights, including rights to conserve the land, hunt, fish, and trap.

- More than **33,000** claims have been staked covering more than **5,000** km²
- **Exploration permits** have been granted by the province, allowing for line cutting, drilling and construction activities
- **Juno Corp** is the largest claim holder with 55% of all claims

Canada & Ontario are moving forward with impact/environmental assessments and actively issuing permits.

- 1 Comment** on the Ring of Fire projects:
 - [Webequie Supply Road](#)
 - [Marten Falls Access Road](#)
 - [Northern Road Link](#)
 - [Regional Assessment](#)
- 2 Follow** the [Ontario Mineral Tracker](#) on Facebook to respond to permits before they're approved
- 3 Sign and share** the grassroots [Protection Declaration](#) calling for the safeguarding of these lands

Your rights matter. UNDRIP imposes a duty on the Crown to seek your **free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)** before moving ahead with any development that could impact your lands. FPIC is an inherent right.



STAY CONNECTED
Together, we can uphold Treaty promises to be kind, to be honest and to share the land.





The “One Project, One Process” Framework

- 1. What is it?*
- 2. The Ontario-Canada Agreement*



Status: Co-operation agreements are now being formed between the provincial and federal governments.

The “One Project One Review” Framework

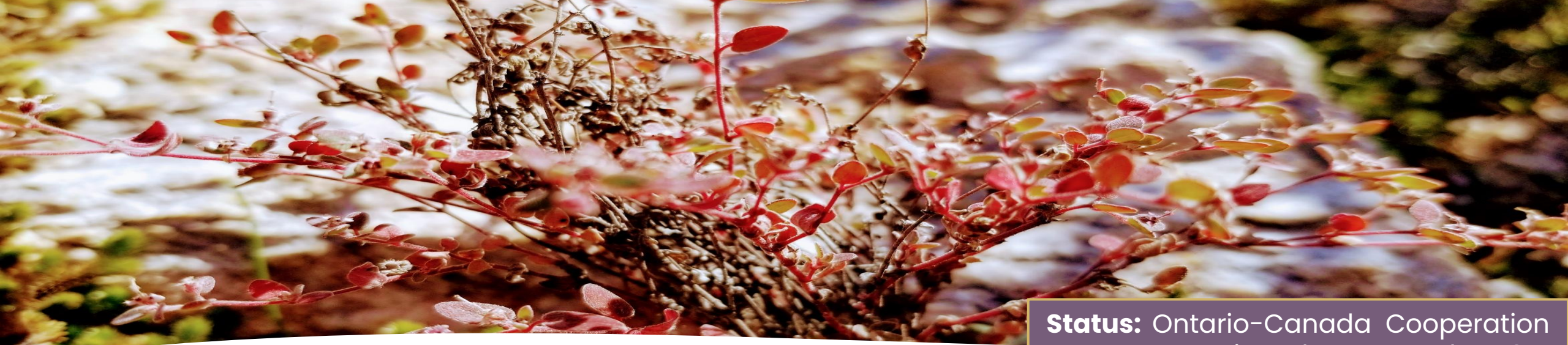
In September 2025, the federal government introduced the “One Project, One Review” Framework – a federal initiative intended to fast-track environmental assessment processes for major projects.

Under this approach, federal and provincial governments can enter into agreements to coordinate and conduct a single review process – also known as “cooperation agreements.”

How this works:

1. **Early Assessment Decision** – the federal government decides whether to rely on the provincial process.
2. **Substitution** – the provincial assessment replaces the federal assessment.
3. **Harmonized** – the federal and provincial governments run a joint assessment.

A streamlined process raises concerns about whether Indigenous rights and environmental impacts will be fully considered.



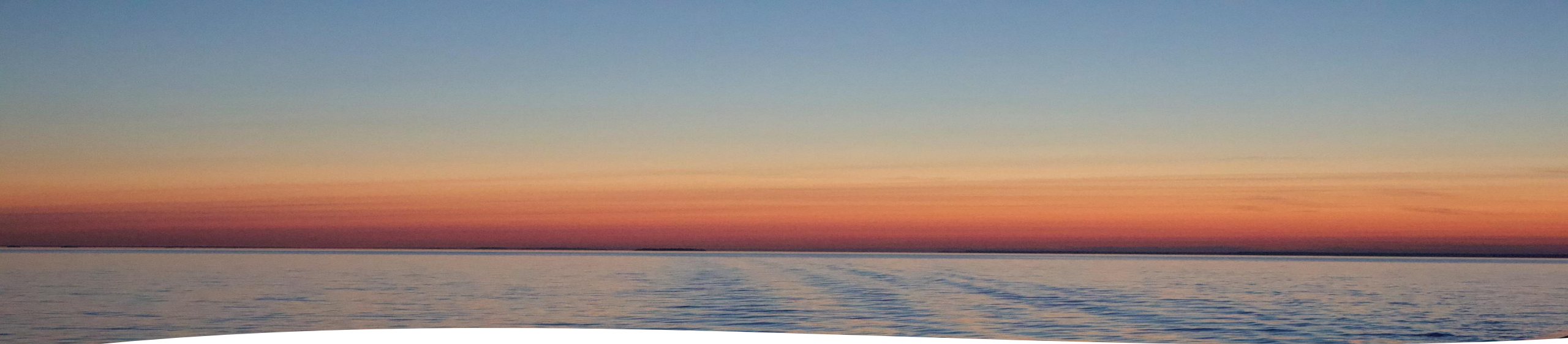
Status: Ontario-Canada Cooperation Agreement signed on December 18, 2025 is in effect.

Ontario and Canada's Cooperation Agreement

In December 2025, the Government of Canada and Government of Ontario signed a cooperation agreement to streamline environmental reviews for major projects, which includes the proposed Ring of Fire.

The agreement was created under "one project, one review" framework to "reduce duplication" between federal and provincial assessments and "significantly streamline" the process.

The agreement places greater reliance on provincial processes, which raises concerns about reduced federal environmental safeguards and oversight.



Our Concerns with One Project, One Review

Erosion of federal oversight: reliance on provincial process could weaken federal protection for fish habitat, migratory birds, and Indigenous rights.

Rushed timelines: 2-year review may limit meaningful public and Indigenous consultation and participation.

Accountability gaps: who will monitor, enforce, or ensure environmental compliance during these processes?

There is no mention of Indigenous decision-making authority through tripartite cooperation agreements.



Where do we go from here?

Next steps, using our voice

What are your main concerns?

The Logging Industry

"That we will have nothing left in the mining companies have their way"

HUMAN RIGHTS

The loss of language and knowledge

Pollution and GHG Emissions

My Children's Future

That we lose the land to companies with no regard to our way of life"

The Mining Industry

"Destruction of our lands, our ways of life, my heart and soul"

Climate Change

Poisoned Waters and Lands

"Taking resources from our land without consulting our Bands and First Nations"

Sickness

What would you like to see protected?

Water/watershed

**Rights (hunting,
fishing, trapping,
ceremonies,
traditional
practices)**

Wildlife

Identity

**Community health
and wellbeing**

Burial sites

Trees

**Future
generations**

Land

Language

**Migration
routes**

Elders

THANK YOU!

Join us in protecting nature and Indigenous rights!

Learn more about our work on our website

Follow us on social media

Share our work with your network

Subscribe to our mailing list for updates and take action alerts



info@naturesdefence.ca



naturesdefence.ca



[@naturesdefence](https://www.instagram.com/naturesdefence)

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