

EAST-WEST TIE TRANSMISSION PROJECT

Connecting Ontario's Northwest



The *Environmental Assessment Act*

An Environmental Assessment is a decision-making process used to promote good environmental planning by assessing the potential effects of certain activities on the environment. In Ontario, this process is defined in the *Environmental Assessment Act* (the *Act*) and its associated regulations. The *Act* ensures that environmental issues are considered, and their effects are planned for, before development or building takes place. Under the *Act*, the definition of “environment” is not limited to the natural environment but includes social, cultural, and economic considerations.

Electricity Projects and the *Environmental Assessment Act*

Electricity projects in Ontario are subject to Ontario Regulation 116/01 under the *Environmental Assessment Act*. This regulation states that a transmission line that will transmit 115 kilovolt (kV) or more of electricity, and is greater than 2 km long is subject to the requirements of the *Act*. The East-West Tie Transmission Project proposes the construction of a 230 kV double-circuit line approximately 400 km long and is therefore subject to an Individual Environmental Assessment (EA).

Individual EA Process

An Individual EA requires that the proponent develop an EA Terms of Reference (ToR) and submit it to the Ministry of Environment (MOE) for approval. Once approved, the second phase of the EA process, the EA Study, can begin. Once submitted, the third phase, Review, commences. The final phase is the Minister's Decision.

According to the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*, “environment” means:

- Air, land or water,
- Plant and animal life, including human life,
- The social, economic and cultural conditions that influence the life of humans or a community,
- Any building, structure, machine or other device or thing made by humans,
- Any solid, liquid, gas, odour, heat, sound, vibration or radiation resulting directly or indirectly from human activities, or
- Any part or combination of the foregoing and the interrelationships between any two or more of them in or of Ontario.

Step 1 – Terms of Reference

A Terms of Reference (ToR) establishes the framework for the preparation and review of the EA. It outlines how the study will be conducted and helps ensure that the public, First Nations and Métis, and government agencies know what will be considered in the EA. The EA Act and associated regulations and guidelines specify the contents of the ToR and EA. NextBridge intends to prepare and submit a ToR which focuses on the Reference Route and identified alternatives.

Public consultation can assist in identification of potential issues and solutions early in the planning process. Input from interested stakeholders ensures that all pertinent information is considered in the decision making process (the EA).

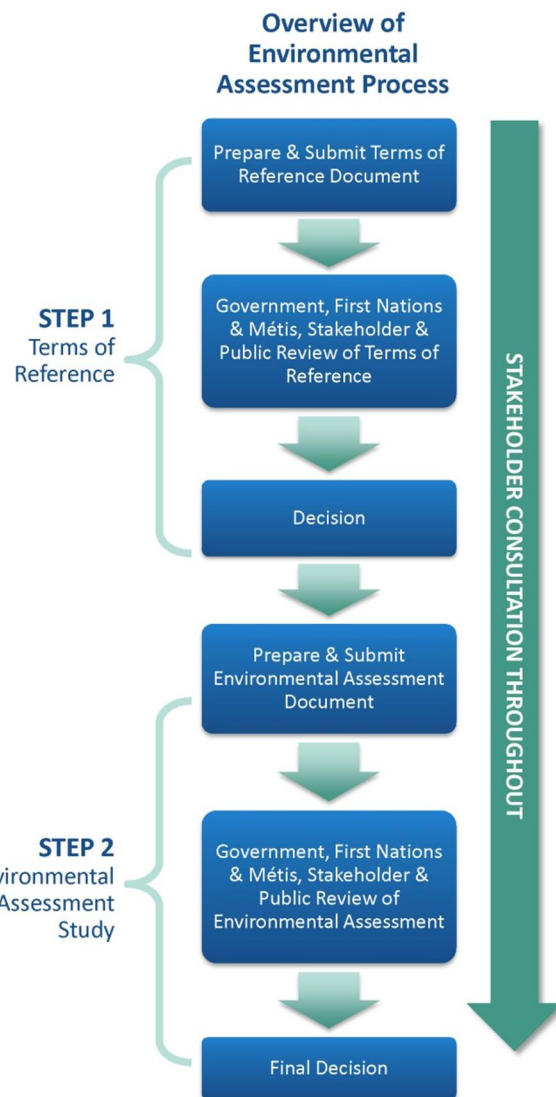
The proponent, NextBridge Infrastructure (NextBridge), must give public notice at the commencement of the ToR. The proponent also must consult with the public and document the results of the consultation during the development of the ToR. Upon submission of the ToR, public notice must once again be given. After submission, the MOE begins its own 30-day consultation process, during which time the public and other interested stakeholders may review and comment on the submitted ToR. Once the ToR is approved, the EA process will proceed in accordance with the ToR.

Step 2 – Environmental Assessment Study

The EA Study will focus on identifying potential effects, potential net effects, and potential mitigation along the route, including, but not limited to line span length; tower height; diversion around sensitive features; alignment of access roads (temporary and permanent); timing of construction; and final route configuration.

The proponent is again responsible for consulting with the public, stakeholders and First Nations and Métis people during the EA Study. Public notice must be given at the commencement of the EA Study. During the EA study, NextBridge may seek public input on the preferred design and mitigation, and other concerns.

Upon completion of the EA Study, NextBridge will issue a Notice of EA Submission and submit the document to the MOE. The Environmental Approvals Branch then coordinates a review of the EA document and solicits comments from potentially affected stakeholders over a seven-week comment period. The MOE reviews the EA and identifies any shortcomings, whether the EA fulfills the requirements of the EA Act and whether the EA was conducted in accordance with the approved ToR. The public, other stakeholders and First Nations and Métis people may again comment on the proposed undertaking, the EA, and MOE's review of the EA.



Final Decision

At the end of the final comment period, the Minister of the Environment may decide to:

- Refer all or part of the matter to the Environmental Review Tribunal for a hearing, or to another tribunal for a decision;
- Refer the EA or a particular issue to mediation;
- Approve the proposed undertaking with appropriate conditions; or
- Refuse to give approval to proceed with the proposed undertaking.

Keeping You Informed

Your input is very important to us, and there are many ways you can reach us. If you would like more information about this project and want to be included on the project mailing list, please contact:

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