



Fact Sheet

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ACT

The *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act) is a federal statute that requires federal departments to conduct environmental assessments for certain projects and activities before providing federal approval or financial support.

Environmental Assessment

Environmental assessment (EA) is a planning tool used to identify the potential impact of projects or activities on the environment: air, water, land and living organisms, including humans. Project proponents can avoid expensive, and sometimes controversial, corrective action by eliminating or reducing potential adverse effects early in the planning stage. Environmental assessment provides decision-makers with the information to approve projects that promote a healthy, sustainable environment.

Environmental Mitigation

Environmental mitigation measures are aimed at preventing or reducing adverse environmental impacts of a proposed project or activity. A project proponent must carry out mitigation measures specified in the EA to receive federal support.

Federal Responsibilities

A Responsible Authority is the federal authority asked to support or approve the project with funding, land permit, license or other approval specified by regulation.

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) acts as a Responsible Authority for projects considered for federal assistance under WD funding programs, as well as Partnership Agreements such as the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund and the Western Economic Partnership Agreements. WD must ensure an EA is conducted on a project as early as possible, before construction begins and irrevocable decisions are made.

According to the Act, an environmental assessment (EA) must be conducted "before irrevocable decisions are made." For most projects, this means the EA must be completed and a decision rendered before construction begins, preferably before any construction tenders or contracts are let. Starting construction before the EA is completed will jeopardize federal support for your project. Canadian Environmental Assessment Act: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-15.2/29299.html>

Federal support will be withheld until the EA is complete or if WD concludes the project is likely to produce significant adverse effects on the environment. WD is also required to solicit input or involvement of other federal authorities that may have responsibilities under CEAA, such as Fisheries and Oceans or Environment Canada.

The Project EA

WD may manage the assessment process on behalf of smaller municipalities. It may delegate responsibility for all or part of the EA directly to the project proponent. WD retains the responsibility to grant federal approval for a project.

Proponent Responsibilities


A project proponent can speed up the EA process by providing accurate, detailed project and environmental information to WD throughout the EA process. The proponent may be assigned such responsibilities as providing engineering plans and documents, environmental studies, historical resources impact assessments or environmental impact statements.

Environmental Assessment Costs

An EA for a simple project may take as little as 15 days and cost the project proponent nothing. For more complex projects, EAs may take several weeks to months. Costs of EAs for complex projects or studies are usually the responsibility of the proponent.

Other Considerations

Agreements are in place for cases in which both federal and provincial jurisdictions require an environmental assessment. This means only one EA is conducted for each project. However, CEAA does not supercede the requirements of other federal, provincial or municipal environmental legislation. Proponents must acquire the necessary authorizations, approvals or licenses from other governments and comply with their



Public consultation requirements range from a simple public notification to formal requests for public and First Nations input. For example, it may be posted or the web-based Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry at http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/index_e.cfm. WD determines public consultation requirements by considering public interest in the project or its potential environmental impact. Public consultation requirements may be delegated to the project proponent.

For more information, contact WD toll-free at 1 888 338-9378 or visit the CEAA web site at www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca

This fact sheet addresses common questions about the application of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to WD projects and activities. This document is intended as reference only. It has no legal sanction. To interpret and apply the law, users should consult the legal text of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and Regulations or visit the CEAA web site: www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca