

Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area
January 22, 2021
Federal Authority Advice Record
Response due to IAAC.RegionalRoF-CdFRregionale.AEIC@Canada.ca by January 15, 2021

Department/ Agency	Department for Women and Gender Equality
Lead RA Contact(s)	Denise Gareau, Director, Policy and External Relations
Full Address	22 Eddy St., Gatineau, QC
Email	CFC.EvaluationImpacts-ImpactsAssessment.SWC@cfc-swc.gc.ca
Telephone	819-938-1132
Alternate Departmental Contact	Catherine Adams, Senior Policy Analyst

Denise Gareau

Name of Departmental / Agency Responder

Director, Policy and External Relations

Title of Responder

<Original signed by>

Signature

January 20, 2020

Date

PART 1 – In providing your responses to the items below, please include any relevant information on associated Indigenous, public or other consultation or engagement activities and identify any partners or collaborations.

1. MANDATE AND AREA(S) OF EXPERTISE

Clearly outline the mandate of your department or agency and detail your area(s) of responsibility or expertise that may be related to the regional assessment

The mandate for the Department of Women and Gender Equality is to advance equality with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression through the inclusion of people of all genders, including women, in Canada’s economic, social, and political life. This application of a gender and diversity lens will help us to understand better the intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors. These factors include – but are not limited to – race, national and ethnic origin, Indigenous origin or identity, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic condition, place of residence and disability.¹

Canada’s primary approach to gender and diversity analysis is Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+). As the federal authority for GBA+, the *Impact Assessment Act* requires WAGE to provide technical advice on proposals as they relate to WAGE’s mandate such as on issues related to Gender-based violence, GBA+ and overarching gender equality considerations. Of note, all federal departments are mandated to apply GBA+ in their area of responsibility so that equality, diversity and inclusion considerations are addressed across all components of the impact assessment process.

2. REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

List and summarize the nature of the regulatory authorities of your department or agency in relation to physical works or activities in the Ring of Fire area.

As a Federal Authority under the Act, the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) has a legislated responsibility to provide its expert information and knowledge related to issues under its mandate to support the impact assessment process.

To date, WAGE has provided input on the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines for two projects in the Ring of Fire area: (i) Webequie Supply Road; and (ii) Martin Falls Community Access Road

3. EXPERT INFORMATION OR KNOWLEDGE

List and summarize the specialists or expert information or knowledge that your department or agency has that may be relevant to the regional assessment. Include all research, reports and data sets in this response inventory.

GBA+ Expert Information

GBA+ is an analytical process used to assess how different groups of women, men and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA+ highlights that a broad range of factors must be considered in addition to those related to sex and gender. All people have multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to what makes them who they are. GBA+ provides a process to help consider how multiple identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age and mental or physical disability as well as the interaction between these factors influence the way we might experience government policies and initiatives. Several resources including a guide on how to apply GBA+ to your work, tips on making GBA+ sustainable and other resources can all be found on the [WAGE GBA+ page](#).

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/news/2018/12/creation-of-the-department-for-women-and-gender-equality.html>

WAGE also has a GBV strategy that is organized across three pillars: Preventing GBV; Supporting survivors and their families; Promoting responsive legal and justice systems. The Strategy will fill gaps in support for diverse populations, including: women and girls; Indigenous women and girls, LGBTQ2, and gender non-binary individuals; women living in Northern, rural and remote communities; women and girls with disabilities; immigrant women and refugee women; children and youth; and senior women. The [GBV portion on WAGE's website](#) includes a GBV knowledge centre; information on funding; engagement processes; and a questions and answers section.

4. POLICIES, PROGRAMS OR INITIATIVES

List and summarize the past, current and planned policies, programs or initiatives of your department or agency that may be relevant to the regional assessment. Include an outline of related funding initiatives in this response and provide information on geographic locations, next steps and timing for the program/initiative.

WAGE is currently leading on a process of evaluating GBA+ with the goal of enhancing the framing and parameters of this analytical tool, and with particular attention to the intersectional analysis of race, indigeneity, disability and sexual identity, among other characteristics. To support others in undertaking rigorous analysis, the Department is working with departments and agencies and, in particular those serving equity-deserving communities to develop a suite of products and resources to support GBA+ that is more intersectional and more fully reflects the needs of different groups of men, women and gender diverse people. Over the course of the next fiscal year, a range of tools will be developed including a new step-by-step guide with direction on each of the factors to consider when doing a GBA+. Sector-specific tools and guidance are also under development including related to the impact assessment process. This will include a GBA+ toolkit tailored specifically to the application of GBA+ in impact assessment and a compilation of best practices to help inform and enable others in undertaking the analysis.

WAGE's Women's Program aims to achieve the full participation of women in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada. Funding is provided to eligible organizations in support of projects at the local, regional and national levels that address three priority areas including: Ending violence against women and girls; Improving women's and girls' economic security and prosperity; and encouraging women and girls in leadership and decision making roles. Women's Program funds eligible organizations and activities across Canada that meet pre-determined funding criteria².

5. OUTLINE ANY ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES, INFORMATION OR KNOWLEDGE AND ANY PARTNERS OR COLLABORATIONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SPECIFIED, ABOVE.

N/A

PART 2 – To contribute to the design of the regional assessment process and development of the terms of reference, please provide information or advice in relation to the items below.

1. Potential outcomes of the regional assessment;

In the same manner that GBA+ supports the determination of impacts of projects on people, based on multiple identity and other factors, regional assessments provide multi-dimensional reviews that are more comprehensive and include a range of considerations related to regional contexts.

The use of a regional assessment in the context of the Ring of Fire area can support the achievement of a range of positive outcomes including:

² <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/fun-fin/wcf-fcf/index-en.html>

- Contributing to a better understanding of the cumulative effects on gender equality, and equality, diversity and inclusion more generally of development activities in the area, which can also serve to inform future assessments;
- More meaningful engagement and participation of Indigenous peoples that will allow for greater clarity on the potential impacts on rights and interests of Indigenous peoples. In addition, the regional assessment will allow for engagement with a diversity of populations within the community (e.g. women, youth) so that a range of perspectives is heard and considered as part of the assessment process.
- More responsive and tailored services informed by diverse sources of information including disaggregated data from sectors under the responsibility of the various jurisdictions (e.g. health), and traditional Indigenous knowledge as well as information on current social and cultural context in the Ring of Fire area.
- Opportunities to identify existing local levers to develop responsive, place-sensitive strategies including those related to the recruitment and advancement of diverse groups including women in the labour market within the Ring of Fire area .

2. Relevant geographic and temporal boundaries;

N/A

3. Factors to be considered in the regional assessment and the scope of those factors;

GBA+ considerations:

Engaging and consulting with women and diverse groups is an important part of the GBA+ process that contributes to a better understanding and consideration of:

- Decision-making processes and abilities of individual groups in the region, including as they relate to the use of local resources.
- Power differentials including who owns what, who has what, who does what, etc.
- Gender norms, roles and relations and how these influence power relations
- Who is most impacted in the community by the current and/or future projects?
- Who employment and training opportunities are reaching and who may be excluded?
- What health and social services are available and where gaps in services may be exacerbated with the implementation of new projects?

Engagement and consultation: The GBA+ process requires identifying people who may be disproportionately affected as a result of a project or already in greater need and then working up from what they say they need. Identifying the experiences and needs of different groups is an iterative and interactive process, best done in consultation with people from various groups and positions in those groups to maximize the diversity and depth of ideas and perspectives.

Engagement and consultation therefore needs to include diverse groups and subgroups. It should also provide information on engagement methods (ensuring accessibility) and a record of who is consulted (disaggregated by sex/gender, age, and ethnicity at a minimum) Ensure all consultation activities are accessible (e.g. childcare available, presented in various formats such as surveys, electronically, over the phone, ensure a diverse representation of feedback, etc.)

Disaggregated data: Data should provide an overview of the current local context as it relates to population group(s) and sub-group(s) particularly those potentially disproportionately impacted by projects or those who may already face barriers to inclusion in their communities. Data should be generated and collected at a granular level disaggregated at a minimum by sex/gender, age, and ethnicity.

Baseline data: Data and statistics should provide information on social, economic and health impacts including those specific to people of diverse genders, those living in poverty, on how labour is divided and on the differential situation of women, men and gender diverse individuals

vis-à-vis key indicators (such as levels of education, literacy, land use and land access, livelihoods / employment, health status, political participation).

Information and data on:

- gender norms, roles and relations and how these influence gendered power relations (e.g., invisibility of women's subsistence work and other economic activities (harvesting activities, etc.), undervaluing of formal and informal labour, lack of cultural acceptance of women leaders, under-resourcing of their initiative and conflicting demands on women³)
- access and use of resources, such as education, information and services and how these may be impacted by current and future projects
- health and social services availability and use
- economic opportunities: employment and training opportunities in the region
- Gender-based violence (e.g., rates of GBV; services available, etc.)

4. Means of communication and engagement that would best facilitate participation of your department or agency in the regional assessment; and

Please contact Catherine Adams (Catherine.adams@cfc-swc.gc.ca) and Alison Puskas (Alison.puskas@cfc-swc.gc.ca)

Both are available via Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or teleconference.

5. Input or advice on any other aspect of the regional assessment.

WAGE recommends considering/reviewing the following:

Report: Implementing a Regional, Indigenous-Led and Sustainability-Informed Impact Assessment in Ontario's Ring of Fire⁴

- Embedding GBA+ in the assessment process means that people with lived-experience, that is people in the communities, are the real authorities. As such, individuals and groups from the local area with diverse perspectives (e.g. women, elders) must be heard for the assessment process to be rigorous;
- The appropriate Indigenous Governing Authority (IGA) must be a collective of affected First Nations, rather than being composed of one of the existing tribal councils or regional organizations (e.g. NAN or Matawa);
- An Elders Advisory Council should be an integral element at all stages of decision-making;
- The ongoing state of the pandemic and community emergency must be addressed first; before new projects can be adequately assessed or fully considered. Communities must be satisfied that any potential projects or new infrastructure will serve to mitigate the impacts of the COVID 19 crisis while also serving to enhance longer-term social, cultural and ecological sustainability;
- Any regional approaches need to provide a framework that can effectively guide project-level assessments and approvals, which in turn become community-level consent processes, as per protocols. These frameworks must include assessments related to economic development, employment opportunities, and the adequacy of community-based infrastructure;
- In addition to communities in this local area facing issues related to the pandemic and associated health, economic and social challenges, this community is also faced with the ongoing crisis of an ongoing youth suicide epidemic, poverty, addiction, overcrowding and unemployment;

³ <https://www.osgoode.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/SCOTT.Final-Synthesis-report.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.osgoode.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/SCOTT.Final-Synthesis-report.pdf>

- Development projects must not exacerbate existing challenges rather they must be designed in a manner that deliberately serves to close gaps and provide community benefits related to the long-term health and well-being of the community as well as that of future generations;
- The functions and contributions that women and Indigenous women make in communities are important for community well-being and development and are relevant to the assessment process.
- Women and traditionally under-represented groups must be provided with opportunities to have their voices heard as part of the assessment process. Assessors must approach this process with humility recognizing that there are different ways of knowing making meaningful efforts to complement western science with Indigenous knowledge;
- The assessment process must include meaningful consideration of issues related to the safety of Indigenous women and children;
- There is evidence that road projects present risks for certain populations including those related to the safety of women and girls;
- There is also evidence that confirms that road projects increase the rate at which drugs and alcohol enter remote communities and measures to reduce or remediate these issues should be considered;
- Traditionally, mining has had far-reaching negative impacts on women in affected communities. Benefits to local communities tend to be limited and also tend to be unequally enjoyed
 - o Specifically, there are fewer skilled and high paying jobs available to women than men.