

ATTACHMENT October 25, 2022

Federal Authority Advice Record: Designation Request under IAA

Response due by November 15, 2022

Sugar Creek Peat Harvesting Project

Department/Agency	Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)
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1. Has your department or agency considered whether it has an interest in the Project; exercised a power or performed a duty or function under any Act of Parliament in relation to the Project; or taken any course of action (including provision of financial assistance) that would allow the Project to proceed in whole or in part?

No.

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2. Is it probable that your department or agency may be required to exercise a power or perform a duty or function related to the Project to enable it to proceed?

WAGE does not hold any regulatory power, functions, or duties.

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3. If your department or agency will exercise a power or perform a duty or function under any Act of Parliament in relation to the Project, will it involve public and Indigenous consultation?

N/A

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4. Is your department or agency in possession of specialist or expert information or knowledge that may be relevant to any potential adverse effects within federal jurisdiction caused by the Project or adverse direct or incidental effects stemming from the Project?

WAGE holds expertise in the application of GBA Plus (as intersectional analysis) as well as information related to gender-based violence.

5. Has your department or agency had previous contact or involvement with the proponent or other parties in relation to the Project?

No.

6. From the perspective of the mandate and area(s) of expertise of your department or agency, does the Project have the potential to cause adverse effects within federal jurisdiction or adverse direct or incidental effects as described in section 2 of IAA? Could any of those effects be managed through legislative or regulatory mechanisms administered by your department or agency? If a licence, permit, authorization or approval may be issued, could it include conditions in relation to those effects?

The mandate of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) 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. In addition to gender equality, WAGE is the Government of Canada lead on GBA Plus, which is an analytical tool to support the development of responsive and inclusive initiatives, including policies, programs, and other initiatives. GBA Plus is a process for understanding who is impacted by the issue being addressed by the initiative; identifying how the initiative could be tailored to meet diverse needs of the people most impacted; and anticipating and mitigating any barriers to accessing or benefitting from the initiative.

Application of GBA Plus within the Impact Assessment process helps unpack, contextualize, and address inequalities that are based on identity and other factors and their intersections. Factors include but are not limited to racialization, national and ethnic origin, Indigenous origin or identity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic condition, place of residence and disability.

From the perspective of WAGE's mandate and responsible areas, the following issues should be addressed in the impact assessment of the Project:

- **Assessing current realities:** Identify the position of various groups with respect to decision-making, participation, access, and control over resources as well as norms, values, and rights. What are the barriers to equality?
- **Inclusion of disaggregated data:** Will data on benefits and negative impacts on diverse people be counted? If data is limited what steps will be taken to ensure that the needs of diverse people are understood and reflected in the Project design?
- **Analysis of differential impacts:** Do diverse populations get a fair share of the benefits associated with the Project? Are some disproportionately affected by the negative consequences (e.g., Gender - based violence)? Will historical

gaps and perceptions prevent certain people from benefiting from the Project equally?

- **Engagement of diverse people in a culturally sensitive manner:** Have people and particularly those who are marginalized been consulted? How will the views and perspectives of these people help shape the Project?
- **Are investments distributed across different groups:** What will be done to ensure that the Project serves to strengthen capacities and quality of life for diverse groups and individuals?
- **Mainstreaming equality:** Does the Project seek to address the identified needs of various people? Do project outcomes include a broader commitment to improving equality and not perpetuating norms and structures that contributed to these inequalities?
- **Information on those implementing the Project.** Does the business have equality, anti-harassment or other relevant policies in place? Is the current workforce diverse? Is there a history of abuses or infractions as it relates to social justice issues? Is training provided on issues related to equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that the implementation team has **the skill, knowledge, and commitment to positive change** to bridge gaps in a lasting manner?

7. Does your department or agency have a program or additional authority that may be relevant and could be considered as a potential solution to concerns expressed about the Project? In particular, the following issues have been raised by the requestor.

The Project could result in potential:

- adverse effects to areas within federal jurisdiction, including Indigenous peoples and lands, species at risk, and fish and fish habitat;
- alteration of the land and hydrological and ecological functions of groundwater, surface water, and wetlands in Fisher River Cree Nation (FRCN) traditional territory;
- adverse effects to fish habitat and spawning within the Sugar Creek watershed system;
- adverse effects to wildlife populations, migration patterns, and wildlife habitat;
- significant adverse impacts on the treaty and aboriginal rights of FRCN, as well as significant adverse effects on FRCN's health, social, and economic conditions;
- change to FRCN's ability to develop its land and economic plans;
- impacts to locations of cultural and historical importance to FRCN and other Indigenous communities;
- adverse effects to the Fisher Bay Provincial Park and Proposed Expansion that is underway;
- contribution to climate change due to loss of peatland carbon storage and sequestration area; and
- cumulative effects of existing peat harvesting operations in the area, which were not considered in previous provincial licensing processes and are likely irreversible or not restorable for well over 100 years.

WAGE does not have any additional program or authority to assist with these issues; however, GBA Plus can be applied to find potential solutions.

8. Does your department or agency have information about the interests of Indigenous groups in the vicinity of the Project; the exercise of their rights protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*; and/or any consultation and accommodation undertaken, underway, or anticipated to address adverse impacts to the section 35 rights of the Indigenous groups?

WAGE does not have any additional program or authority to assist with the section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* nor Indigenous consultation and accommodation. However, GBA Plus can be applied to anticipate adverse impacts on the Indigenous populations in order to mitigate any barriers and identify how the project could be tailored to meet diverse needs of the people impacted by the proposed initiative.

9. If your department has guidance material that would be helpful to the proponent or the Agency, please include these as attachments or hyperlinks in your response.

Denise Gareau

Name of departmental / agency
responder

Director, GBA Plus Directorate,
Research Results & Delivery
Women and Gender Equality Canada

Title of responder

November 14, 2022

Date

Overview of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)

GBA Plus is an analytical tool to support the development of responsive and inclusive initiatives, including policies, programs, and other initiatives. GBA Plus is a process for understanding who is impacted by the issue being addressed by the initiative; identifying how the initiative could be tailored to meet diverse needs of the people most impacted; and anticipating and mitigating any barriers to accessing or benefitting from the initiative. GBA Plus is also an ongoing process that does not stop once an initiative has been developed. GBA Plus is an analytical tool that can be applied to all stages of initiative development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Applying GBA Plus early in the policy development process ensures that diversity considerations are embedded in the decision-making process, allowing for responsive and inclusive initiatives that meet the needs of diverse groups of people.

GBA Plus involves consideration of the context within which people live, including systems and structures of power. When we consider how these factors work together, we recognize that there are as many differences within groups of people as there are between groups. This recognition is important for doing GBA Plus well and thoroughly.

Some key questions to consider as data and information are gathered at all stages of GBA Plus include, but are not limited to:

- What disaggregated data is available to understand the various intersecting dimensions of the issue?
- Am I prioritizing certain factors and/or data over others? If so, why?
- Who should be involved in gathering and analysing data?
- How does age, culture, disability, education, ethnicity, geography, gender, economic status, language, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation shape who is impacted by this issue? How do these factors change the nature and extent of the impacts?
- How might I engage those who are affected by this issue in my analysis and in the development, implementation and monitoring of the initiative including those who are not traditionally represented?
- Are there any gaps in data in identifying differences and inequalities?

Additional information on GBA Plus and diversity analysis is available at the following:

- <https://research-groups.usask.ca/reed/documents/CEAA%20Report.FINAL.%20Walker%20Reed%20Thies sen.%20Gender%20Diversity%20in%20IA.Feb%208%202019.pdf>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/policy-guidance/practitioners-guide-impact-assessment-act/gender-based-analysis.html#toc9>

Documenting the context – Creating a baseline

If an Impact Statement is required, there would be a need to document baseline information about the community potentially impacted by the project. This would include basic data and gender and equality analysis as it related to the social, economic and health impacts, such as gender and poverty, division of labour, the differential situation of different groups vis-à-vis indicators (such as literacy, land access, participation in fishing/ agriculture, political participation, etc.). This information would help clarify the current situation as it relates to differences and disparities between individuals and groups and to help identify whether certain populations face barriers to benefitting from the project or are at greater risk of being negatively impacted by the effects of the initiative.

The analysis should extend beyond the descriptive (e.g., percentage of low-income people) to address critical questions about norms, roles, and relations and how these may influence power relations (e.g., who has what, who does what, etc.) in a particular context/community. A robust baseline should also demonstrate linkages between the economic, social, and legal environment where norms and rules in organizations or in other societal structures become obstacles for certain groups (e.g., historical and contextual issues that have limited access to opportunities). For example, could social norms related to the behaviour of younger women create restrictions in attending public events, or being disproportionately burdened by household chores or childcare responsibilities? Should these younger women also be from lower socio-economic groups and have limited educational attainment levels, would they have the confidence to raise their views and would their perspectives have weight in a townhall meeting for example.

Disaggregated data

Detailed overview of the target population group(s) and local context will be necessary in the Impact Statement. This will allow to clearly identify the segments of the population that will either benefit or be negatively impacted by the project. Information should be updated and disaggregated at minimum by sex, gender, age, and ethnicity. Where possible, data should be further disaggregated to include information such as on the impact to diverse groups within the project's area of influence, such as Indigenous peoples, women, low income, under or unemployed, disabled, seniors and systematically marginalized groups. Disaggregated baseline information will be essential in the Impact Statement to demonstrate changes over the life of the project and to provide a reference point for assessing gender equality results. Extracting this data normally involves consulting a range of sources, such as government statistics, administrative reports, or previous studies. If data gaps exist, this should be mentioned up front in the Impact Statement and additional steps should be taken to fill gaps in information. For instance, while there is a rise in census participation from Indigenous communities, the information may not always be available.

The quantitative information, including gender sensitive data, should also be complemented by qualitative insights from studies or consultations and from a diversity of sources. For example, the Impact Statement should provide a detailed profile of the socio-economic conditions of the households and communities that may be affected by the Project.

Public Engagement and decision-making

Consultation with various groups and individuals, including residents and Indigenous groups, are an important element of the GBA Plus process. Companies often fail to adequately consult with women or diverse groups when negotiating access to land, compensation or benefit-sharing agreements. In addition, language and information materials should be accessible to all. If not adequately consulted, this can disempower and disadvantage individuals as groups, and many also undermine traditional decision-making structures. Communities also have different social, economic, and political conditions and cultural specificities that combine in different ways to enable or constrain women's agency and leadership. It is important to understand decision making processes and abilities of individuals or groups in the local area – not only who, but also different kinds of decisions people make, particularly related to the use of resources.

Ultimately, the Impact Statement should allow for a better understanding of people's decision-making abilities about development in the community, particularly on the use of resources. An Impact Statement can provide information on how the project intends to support culturally sensitive participation of women and diverse groups in decision making.

Social needs and well-being

The Impact Statement should also include information on what was heard through the engagement or consultation process on social needs and well-being. Including diverse perspectives in engagement and consultation processes supports the identification of different needs, particularly as it relates to social needs such as health or social services. For example, when barriers are identified to women's participation such as lack of childcare services, measures can be considered to provide childcare services or creating child-friendly spaces during meetings. Similarly, there are cases where men gain employment in industrial projects and withdraw their labour from traditional subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, gathering and/or trapping, which can create – and exacerbate existing – inequalities in the communities. The Impact Statement should demonstrate how engagement of community members has increased understanding of adverse impacts and informed mitigation measures to enhance positive impacts.

Access and control over resources

Access and control over resources relates to both the availability of resources, and the benefits that come from their use. The proponent may wish to include information in the Impact Statement on how access and use of resources, such as education, information and services will be impacted by the implementation of the proposed project. The Impact Statement should elaborate on how the proponent plans to implement local employment and policies and planning, while using local skills and supporting local initiatives.

For the project to be sustainable and inclusive, the Impact Statement should identify resources in the community, and describe who accesses these resources. For example, if traditional livelihoods are affected and certain groups lack the required skills for employment, the proponent might consider ways to remove barriers through targeted activities and supports. In addition to direct employment, the Proponent could consider inclusion of underrepresented groups through supply chain arrangements, like for example, procuring goods and services from businesses owned by local, Indigenous persons and/or women.

In addition, to understanding the constraints and barriers faced by certain individuals or groups, the Impact Statement should include a description of the social norms and broader social power structures. Social norms refer to the rules and accompanying behaviours that govern social behaviour and expectations. Both formal and informal rules govern market behaviours. The 'informal rules' include norms (or what we call "social norms") and relations (meaning the power dynamics between people). For example, women often occupy different economic spheres, due to social norms that define acceptable roles and behaviours for women. Across most contexts, women are more likely to work as unpaid family workers, in the informal sector or part-time so that they can combine work with care responsibilities. Even in formal employment, in many contexts women tend to work in "female" occupations for lower returns.

Economic opportunities

Economic opportunities and access to financial benefits from projects is often limited for certain segments of the population. Moreover, the Impact Statement should include a description of whether and how the project will generate significant benefits and opportunities for local communities (e.g., who from the communities will benefit) and the potential for differential benefits, including opportunities for women, persons with disabilities or Indigenous peoples in the project workforce. It should also outline the current rates of employment and describe differences between and among subgroups in the local area (e.g., people with low levels of educational attainment).

As the project proponent develops the Impact Statement, information should be included on how diverse groups of people are employed either as wage earners in the labour market or in customary livelihood occupations. This is particularly relevant for Indigenous communities where “pluri-activity” often characterizes household incomes. The proponent may wish to include information on what potential it has for increasing employment for women and other under-represented groups in the sector and for local workers more generally. The proponent may wish to identify measures that will be undertaken to support the recruitment, development, and retention of those workers. Information on the training opportunities that will be made available for the prospective workers may also be of relevance. This could include collaboration with local learning institutions to deliver training targeted to these populations. Measures related to the supply chain may also be considered for example, the creation of incentives or criteria that favour local suppliers. Additional detail on how the project can have positive implications on the local economy more broadly should be included (e.g., supplying food, accommodations or potentially as it related to purchasing construction materials). The proponent may also wish to describe in the Impact Statement its own workforce development plans as they related to diversity and inclusion.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

In certain cases, projects can generate changes to the composition of the population and result in increasing migration and influx of transient workers. In most cases, men remain over-represented in the extraction development and infrastructure sector. The Impact Statement should identify and assess the potential issues of GBV (e.g., sexual harassment, violence against women, human trafficking). The Impact Statement will need to explore these potential issues and increased risks such as GBV, which can make women feel less safe in their homes and communities. The Impact Statement will need to identify the specific systemically marginalized groups among women (e.g., Indigenous, younger women, youth), that are often disproportionately affected by these health and safety risks, including intimidation and discrimination. Risks and negative impacts can also be experienced by groups that are not specifically targeted by the project.

GBV is a persistent problem in all societies and should be explored in the assessment, for example, to ensure that the proponent and worksite contractors take measures to prevent sexual harassment and violence. The Impact Statement should include an overview of the legal framework, such as relevant labour laws and policies related to GBV. It is important to note that Canada’s laws governing domestic violence and the jurisdictions to address the problems differ from province to province. The Impact Statement should also consider mitigation measures, where relevant, such as initiatives to support the safety and security of people, including codes of conduct and programs to engage men as change agents. If temporary infrastructure is required, such infrastructure should include washroom facilities that are safe spaces for all workers. Where possible, the proponent should include background information on current levels of GBV and other forms of violence, if relevant, and identify how activities undertaken in the context of the project might have unintended impacts or increase risks. Concrete measures should be included to mitigate these risks and monitor developments in the impacted communities to guide future action.

Conclusion

While GBA Plus should be embedded throughout the Impact Statement and Impact Assessment, a specific section that summarizes key issues and identifies mitigating measures to address these issues can be useful as it helps form the basis for a GBA Plus implementation framework. It is recommended that key issues and practical measures be prioritized, rather than devising an exhaustive list that might not be realistic to implement. Underpinning these key actions with indicators of success and by developing a plan to monitor progress on a regular basis, serves to embed gender and equality, diversity and inclusion considerations as part of implementation and robust project management.