

Aaniin,

Trisha Cowie nindizhnikaas. Gnaajwang Kwe indigoo. Anishinaabe-kwe ndaw. Tik nindoodem. Hiawatha First Nation minwaa Williams Treaties First Nations nidoonjibaa. My community is Hiawatha and I live in the overlapping treaty territories of Williams Treaties and Robinson Huron Treaty. My rights and environment have been significantly impacted by every nuclear related industry. The wrongs of the past have never been addressed and now additional, compounding harms are being considered.

I am writing to express my concern about May 8th discussion paper which outlined Government of Canada plans to make changes related impact assessment of major projects

The proposals include limiting Federal review and decision-making to no more than one year, transferring responsibility for impact assessment of nuclear projects, and enabling economic zones where normal assessment and permitting processes could be suspended

I am concerned about the proposal to transfer impact assessments for nuclear and uranium projects from the independent Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) to the nuclear industry dominated Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC).

The discussion paper is unclear as to how this new approach to Impact Assessment (IA) would be implemented, but it does indicate that even reviews already underway – where Canadians and Indigenous people have already invested tens of thousands of hours to participate in the IAAC-led process – could be handed over to the CNSC.

The CNSC is the wrong agency to deliver the impact assessment process because it is not trusted, it is led by nuclear industry insiders, it is seen as a promoter and co-proponent of nuclear projects, it reports to the Minister who promotes nuclear power, it has never denied a licence application, it often excludes the public from its hearings, and it does not have the required independence from the nuclear industry.

In particular, the Williams Treaties First Nations who participated in the Darlington New Nuclear Project (DNNP) licensing hearings repeatedly voiced a lack of proper consultation and the inability of the CNSC to consider and adhere to community governance protocols.

The CNSC has already proven that it makes decisions prior to consultation being completed and prior to proper consultation. This was most recently demonstrated in the 2024 and 2025 DNNP licensing decisions where important studies, such as an Indigenous Knowledge Study, Rights Impact Assessment, Cumulative Effects Assessment, and “Gap Analysis”, were not completed yet the CNSC approved the construction of a risky, first of its kind Small Modular Reactor. The CNSC makes decisions at the expense of First Nation rights and the environment.

These studies should not be optional, they should be required. They need to be required prior to decisions being made to be meaningful, not after.

A more holistic lens needs to be applied to whether the CNSC should have jurisdiction in matters of impact assessments. There is no reconciliation in a decision that will allow a serial perpetrator of First Nation rights to now also be the arbiter of the impact assessment process. It is a fundamentally, flawed and unjust decision that will only degrade the integrity of the process and erode trust in our institutions.

Decisions about nuclear must include Indigenous knowledge and consider our laws and teachings. All future nuclear development must also be considered in the context of past harms and cumulative effects that will only be compounded by pursuing new nuclear developments.

Miigwetch,

Trisha Cowie