



April 22, 2026

Nations of the North Peace Comments on Peace River Nuclear Power Plant Revised Initial Project Description

I. BACKGROUND

Beaver First Nation, Dene Tha' First Nation, Little Red River Cree Nation, and Tallcree First Nation (collectively, the “**Nations of North Peace**”) provide the following submission in relation to the Revised Initial Project Description (“**Revised IPD**”) prepared by Energy Alberta (the “**Proponent**”) for the Peace River Nuclear Power Project (the “**Project**”).

The Peace River flows through the Nations of North Peace’s Traditional and Treaty Territory and nourishes our land and our People. Our Peoples, which together number over 13,000 members, continue to rely on these lands and waters to hunt, fish, trap, gather, and support other important cultural practices and activities. The Peace River and surrounding lands and tributaries have shaped our unique identity and way of life, including our language, laws, economy, culture, and spirituality.

The Crown sought the agreement of the Nations of North Peace’s ancestors to enter into Treaty 8 to open the region up to non-Indigenous settlement. The purpose of Treaty 8 was and remains to provide for the peaceful coexistence of our Peoples and settlers. Our Nations did not surrender the use and care of the waters in our Treaty. In fact, our reserve lands were specifically selected to guarantee continued access to the waters to ensure the present and future economic viability and development of our reserves. The Crown promised that the Nations of North Peace would be ensured the right to carry on our way of life free from interference as well as the rights to hunt, fish, trap, and gather natural resources in our Territory. These solemn promises induced the Nations of North Peace’s ancestors to enter Treaty 8.

The Crown has not honoured its commitments under Treaty 8. Over the past twenty years, the pace and scope of oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, transportation, and hydro projects, among others, has increased in our traditional lands and many core areas are now under intense pressure from such activities. The cumulative impacts that harm our lands cut well below the depth of a plough. Layered on top of these industrial stressors are other forms of impactful activity such as guide outfitting, recreational ATV, camping activities, sports hunting, fishing and poaching. A significant proportion of each of our communities depend on the Peace River watershed, valley, and river to put food on the

table for their families through the year. We rely on the land to provide sustenance and further impacts to the land and wildlife puts our communities' food security at risk.

II. PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed Project has the potential to result in a wide array of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the Nations of North Peace's rights, culture, wellbeing, and way of life. The two sites under consideration for the Project are directly adjacent to the Peace River and would rely on its waters. The potential for any accident or malfunction, no matter how small, during the Project's construction, operations, and decommissioning could pose substantial and long-lasting adverse consequences to our Nations and families. Further, a reasonable apprehension about any ecological change resulting from emissions into the Peace River has a high likelihood of discouraging our community members from hunting, fishing, gathering and carrying out other practices in downstream areas. This will exacerbate our current concerns over confidence in wild foods and food security. The Nations of North Peace are similarly concerned about river flows and how such flows will be impacted by the proposed Project over the next century.

The Nations of North Peace worldviews are grounded in the principle of Wahkohtowin, which translates to "kinship" and represents an understanding of the interconnectedness between people, animals, lands, air, and water. For this Project, this means that the impacts to the lands and river flows are felt as direct impacts to our Peoples and all our relations. We have a responsibility to ensure these impacts are as minimal as possible.

The Nations of North Peace engage with the Proponent, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada ("**IAAC**"), and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Committee ("**CNSC**") on the Project in the context of the principle of Wahkohtowin and our serious concerns about the well-being of our Peoples, lands, and waters.

III. IAAC DECISION

As First Nations reliant on the Peace River, the Nations of the North Peace are being asked not just to contend with the many anticipated impacts of the proposed Project, but to also live with the threat of high-consequence, low-probability events that could permanently devastate our homeland. Confidence in the ability of the impact assessment process to effectively grapple with this reality is low. This is why the Proponent's request to convert this process to one that relies on a Plant Parameter Envelope ("**PPE**") in its Revised IPD is a significant and radical change that threatens our tenuous belief in the effectiveness of this impact assessment process.

It is the Nations of the North Peace's position that adopting a PPE framework for this impact assessment process does not conform with the right of free, prior, and informed consent ("**FPIC**"), and as such is not an appropriate regulatory mechanism. It is

unacceptable for the Proponent to delay the choice of a technology to a later date, leaving Indigenous Nations to grapple with the resulting uncertainty.

For the reasons that are outlined below, the Nations of North Peace respectfully request that IAAC reconsider its determination that the Revised IPD changes are “limited in nature”. In reconsidering its determination, we request that IAAC open a consultation period to engage with potentially impacted Indigenous Nations to understand our respective perspectives on the Revised IPD. During this period of consultation and reconsideration, the Nations of North Peace request that the timeline is paused.

IV. INITIAL PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

In April 2025, IAAC accepted the Proponent’s original Initial Project Description (“**Original IPD**”) for posting. The Nations of North Peace were not provided sufficient notice, time, or capacity funding to provide submissions on the Original IPD or engage the experts whose advice is critical to the Nations of North Peace’s meaningful participation in the Project. The Nations of the North Peace did, however, provide submissions on the Draft Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan (“**IEPP**”) and Draft Integrated Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines (“**TISGs**”), in which we outlined various concerns with the Project.

In February 2026, the Proponent submitted a Revised IPD. The core revision involves replacing sole consideration of the Project using CANDU MONARK reactors with a PPE that considers both the CANDU MONARK and Westinghouse Electric Company’s AP1000 as potential technologies for the Project. The implications of assessing the impacts of heavy water versus light water reactors simultaneously represents a significant change to this impact assessment process. The Nations of North Peace are thus deeply concerned by IAAC’s decision to accept Energy Alberta’s Revised IPD without condition, and without consultation.

IAAC’s public notice of this decision, dated March 2, 2026, states that as the changes to the Revised IPD are “limited in nature”, they do not warrant “an additional public comment period prior to finalizing the Integrated Guidelines.”¹ With the submission of the Revised IPD—which appears to have been “the activity for which it had requested the time be suspended”, rather than engagement with Indigenous Nations as previously alleged—IAAC recommenced the timeline without further delay or consideration.

Given the various directives that have been issued by the federal government in recent years regarding the need to accelerate the assessment and approval of nuclear projects, it is clear that IAAC is under significant pressure to avoid causing delays.² This position is deeply troubling, particularly given the magnitude of this Project, as it puts IAAC in the position of not being able to effectively fulfill its mandate. As an agent of the

¹ IAAC, [Peace River Nuclear Power Project - Notice of Time Limit Resumption](#), March 2, 2026.

² See, for example, IAAC, [Co-operation Agreement on Environmental and Impact Assessment](#), April 2, 2026 at s 5(1).

Crown responsible for consultation and accommodation, IAAC must be provided the space to consult meaningfully with the affected Indigenous Nations.

Characterizing the changes to the Revised IPD as being “limited in nature” fundamentally mischaracterizes the significance of the decision and its implication on the impact assessment process.

V. FREE, PRIOR, AND INFORMED CONSENT

The Nations of North Peace intend to rely on our right to FPIC with respect to this Project in accordance with Articles 18 and 29(2) of *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (“UNDRIP”).³ This is a major project that would have wide-reaching and long-lasting impacts on the Nations of North Peace Territories. The risk of catastrophic high-consequence events is a reality that cannot be denied. Further, the extent of cumulative effects on our already compromised rights makes this Project particularly concerning for us. Given this, it is essential that our right to participate in decision-making is recognized.

Further, the proposed nuclear facility would involve the storage of radioactive and other hazardous materials including heavy metals, corrosion products and solvents, and coolants and treatment chemicals. The wastes that would be produced by this Project would be stored on site for years to come, and could deeply impact the surrounding environment, including Nations of the North Peace Territories. Given there is no disposal solution yet proposed for these radioactive wastes, this storage would likely last for decades if not forever.

VI. PLANT PARAMETER ENVELOPE

While PPEs are a recognized regulatory tool, the Nations of North Peace submit that adopting this approach is not consistent with UNDRIP or the right of FPIC. FPIC requires that Indigenous groups have clear, stable, and complete information about a project’s impacts. Adopting a PPE framework benefits the Proponent at the expense of Indigenous Nations and the public. It injects significant uncertainty into the impact assessment process and undermines its integrity. Key decisions are shifted to later stages, after the impact assessment process is complete. This undermines transparency and informed participation.

The result is a lack of sufficient detail about the final design, technology, and operational characteristics of the facility, making it more difficult to:

1. accurately assess environment, health, economic, social, and cultural impacts;
2. understand the full scope of potential risks; and
3. meaningfully evaluate cumulative effects.

³ See *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, SC 2021, c 14.

From the Nations of North Peace's perspective, using a PPE undermines the ability to assess impacts before approvals are granted, deferring critical design choices that may significantly alter risk profiles, and undermining the Nations of North Peace's ability to provide or withhold our free, prior, and informed consent.

Consultation based on hypothetical or variable project scenarios does not meet the standard required for the Nations of North Peace to be able to exercise our right of FPIC. It places the Nations of North Peace in a reactive rather than decision-making position if critical decisions are made after a point where consent would carry the most weight. This threatens the principle that consent must be provided without coercion or structural pressure. Institutional momentum is a significant threat for Indigenous Nations faced with projects when the willingness to fundamentally reconsider a project diminishes with the passage of time.

By assessing a range of parameters rather than a defined design, there is a risk that impact predictions will be too high-level, overly generalized, or conservative in ways that obscure real risks. Interactions between parameters, such as reactor type, cooling systems, and waste streams may not be adequately assessed. There is a real risk that more site-specific or design-specific harms are deferred and ultimately underexamined. This is particularly concerning for nuclear facilities where low-probability but high-consequence events must be rigorously evaluated.

We have made clear that our concerns regarding cumulative effects is of paramount importance to the Nations of North Peace. The ability to accurately assess these effects is eroded through the use of a PPE. Understanding potential cumulative effects of a project is extremely challenging even when that project is clearly defined. The PPE approach complicates this assessment considerably by introducing multiple potential impact pathways, making it difficult to model long-term and combined effects, and limiting the ability to compare alternatives meaningfully. Given the pressures on the Nations of North Peace Territories, this gap and uncertainty is simply unacceptable.

The Nations of North Peace's inherent, Aboriginal, and Treaty rights are deeply connected to our lands and waters. The assessment must incorporate Indigenous Knowledge of these lands and waters, and Indigenous perspectives on the potential impacts to rights. The uncertainty inherent in a PPE approach makes it difficult for the Nations of North Peace to assess impacts on harvesting rights and food sovereignty, water quality, and fish and wildlife. Without project certainty, the assessment cannot adequately account for how different design outcomes may uniquely affect the Nations of North Peace's rights and way of life. This leads to a failure to fully understand the impact at the assessment stage and the Indigenous perspective on impacts.

VII. LOST OPPORTUNITY

The Revised IPD represents a significant undertaking by the Proponent to revise the Original IPD. The re-submission of the IPD provided an opportunity for the Proponent to

address concerns raised by the Nations of North Peace in our submissions on the Draft IEPP and TISGs. Instead, Energy Alberta states in the Revised IPD that they are “awaiting the final TISGs before determining how issues raised through engagement and communications” with Indigenous Nations may be incorporated.⁴ As a result, the Nations of North Peace’s concerns remain unaddressed. This represents a missed opportunity that hinders respectful dialogue and trust building. Rather than presenting additional information to provide more clarity about the Project, including additional clarity about basic issues such as the transmission infrastructure that will necessarily result from this Project, the Revised IPD has created more uncertainty and more cause for concern.

VIII. CONCLUSION

A fundamental part of the Nations of North Peace’s worldview is the concept of Wahkohtowin. This is a recognition and an understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. The proposed Project could have significant impacts on the Peace River and all that depends on it. These interconnected impacts threaten to significantly undermine our ability to continue to exercise our rights as inherited by and promised to us. In considering this Project, we ask the Crown to recall these promises and recognize the many ways in which these promises have already been weakened and compromised.

Large scale nuclear energy facilities create a complex web of interrelated and disparate impacts. Undertaking an impact assessment process with respect to this kind of a project is incredibly challenging. In addition to the anticipated impacts, consideration must be given to high-consequence, low-probability catastrophic events. This reality leads to fear, dread, real risk and the perception of risk, and alienation of our People from our lands and waters. The cultural, social, economic, and territorial implications of this Project are potentially deep. Using a PPE will only amplify these factors and make meaningful consent more difficult.

The acceptance of the PPE in this context creates a material risk that the impact assessment will be legally defective, as it would proceed without a stable project description sufficient to evaluate effects on inherent, Aboriginal, and Treaty rights. It is our position that FPIC cannot be meaningfully exercised when the Proponent reserves the right to select fundamental project features only after the assessment has been completed, and approvals have been granted.

Replacing a single, clearly defined reactor technology with two fundamentally different reactor designs—each with distinct waste streams, cooling systems, risk profiles, and accident scenarios—cannot reasonably be characterized as a “limited” change. It alters the scope, complexity, and certainty of the assessment at a foundational level.

⁴ Revised IPD, p 3-6.