

March 6, 2026

Re: Feedback on IAAC draft cooperation agreement

Thank for you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft cooperation agreement between the Impact Agency Assessment of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia that aims to streamline impact and environmental assessment processes. **However, I will note, that our organization is surprised that we found out about this, from a colleague, on the last day for submissions.** We are a stakeholder organization that has repeatedly engaged with both the federal and provincial assessment processes. We work with the public and community organizations to help them engage with these processes and as such have gained extensive insights about the processes' challenges and weaknesses in general. We have also [prepared a report](#) in cooperation with East Coast Environmental Law that describes ways in which the provincial environmental assessment process could be improved, which was submitted to the Province during their environmental assessment process review. We are one of the few stakeholders in Nova Scotia with extensive understanding of both assessment processes yet we were not contacted by either level of government to engage with this. I also see from the submissions online that other key organisations that could have brought their understanding and experience to the conversation as well have not created submissions, possibly because they did not know about this feedback period either. **I encourage you to reach out to stakeholder groups in Nova Scotia and extend the comment period if you truly want constructive feedback on this draft cooperative agreement.**

Based only upon reading the draft cooperation agreement today I can recommend that the following items be removed or elaborated upon:

9th Whereas: "**WHEREAS** Canada and Nova Scotia recognize the importance of implementing their assessment processes in a manner that respects federal and provincial jurisdiction and is transparent, coordinated, efficient and timely, enables each of them to exercise their respective powers and duties under the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) and the *Nova Scotia Environment Act* (NS EA), and contributes to a positive investment climate in Canada"

Feedback: The Provincial environmental assessment process under the *Environment Act* is not transparent, so this adjective should be removed or the lack of transparency remedied. Two important distinctions between the federal IA process and the provincial EA process are: IAAC is an independent agency (NS Environment and Climate Change's Environmental Assessment Branch is not), and IAAC produces independent reports about projects which are released before the Minister makes a decision about the project (NS ECC does not do this). Both of these are vital for transparency in the process, and the Province does not currently have these key parts in its environmental assessment process.

3. Decision-making about conduct of a federal impact assessment

"(3) When considering a request to designate a project under section 9 of the IAA, the federal minister, or IAAC acting under the federal minister's delegated authority, will consider the extent to which provincial processes will address adverse effects within federal jurisdiction – and the direct or incidental adverse effects – that may be caused by the carrying out of the project, as set out in paragraph 9(2)(d) of the IAA."

Feedback: This clause should be removed. There should be a pathway for projects to be considered under Section 9 of IAA on their own merits, and not based upon the Minister's or IAAC's estimation of how Nova Scotia's EA process would pan out. I have had the experience of a project that should have been designated by the Minister and a federal IA completed, yet the project went through the provincial EA process and potential impacts to valued ecosystem components (and human health), including those in federal jurisdiction, were not addressed.

5. Substitution to a Harmonized Process

Feedback: Harmonized processes may be warranted and helpful, however, when harmonizing processes the standards, guidelines, and requirements that are most stringent should be used. Again, I have had the experience that environmental standards in Nova Scotia can lag behind the federal government, sometimes simply due to the fact that the Province has not taken the time to update their standards yet a review and update has been completed by the Government of Canada.

8. Indigenous Peoples

Ecology Action Centre is not an Indigenous-led organization but we are Treaty People in Mi'kma'ki. We do not speak for the Mi'kmaq, but we have been hearing, loud and clear, in the public realm, that the relationship between the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia and the Province is not good right now. We strongly recommend that the Government of Canada engage directly with individual First Nations, and collective Mi'kmaw organizations (such as KMK) in Nova Scotia and listen to them on how to potentially proceed with this cooperation agreement in a good way.

There are several other stakeholder organizations in Nova Scotia that could provide very helpful feedback to this process. If you did not also hear from them, I think you should consider extending the feedback period in order to hear that wise counsel.

Sincerely,



Karen McKendry
Senior Wilderness Outreach Coordinator
Ecology Action Centre

