



## THE BASICS OF FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (the Agency) provides Canadians with high-quality environmental assessments in support of sustainable development. The Agency coordinates the Government of Canada's Aboriginal consultation activities during the environmental assessment process for most major projects in Canada. The Agency operates under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012), which establishes the federal environmental assessment process for most regions of Canada.

### **What are the benefits of conducting an environmental assessment?**

An environmental assessment allows the environmental effects of a proposed project to be predicted *before* the project is carried out, so that potential negative environmental effects can be avoided or minimized. This increases government accountability and contributes to informed decision making. It benefits from public and Aboriginal involvement.

### **What is examined during a federal environmental assessment?**

A federal environmental assessment examines:

1. Environmental effects resulting from the project and how these interact with other past, present and future human actions;
2. Significance of those effects;
3. Public comments received; and
4. Mitigation measures and follow-up program requirements.

### **When does the federal environmental assessment process apply to a proposed project?**

When a project has the potential to cause environmental effects that are within federal jurisdiction, a federal environmental assessment may be required. The *Regulations Designating Physical Activities* lists the types of projects that may require a federal environmental assessment. The Minister of the Environment may also decide that an environmental assessment is required for a project not listed in the Regulations.

### **Who makes the final decision?**

Based on the environmental assessment report and comments from Aboriginal groups and the public, the Minister of the Environment makes a decision on the environmental assessment. The project can only proceed if it is unlikely to cause any significant adverse environmental effects or if Cabinet has determined that such effects are justified. The proponent must comply with the conditions outlined in the Minister's decision statement. Following the decision, the project also has to be reviewed by any federal departments responsible for any permits or authorizations that the project may need to proceed.

### **Aboriginal peoples and the federal environmental assessment process**

#### Duty to Consult

The Government of Canada must consult and, where appropriate, accommodate, Aboriginal groups when its activity associated with a project has the potential to adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal or Treaty rights. The type of consultation activities carried out by the Agency will vary on a project-by-project basis and depend on the nature of the rights, and the potential adverse impacts on those rights.

#### Environmental Assessment

A federal environmental assessment must consider any environmental effect that could affect Aboriginal people's:

1. Health and socio-economic conditions;
2. Physical and cultural heritage;
3. Current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes; or
4. Structures, sites or things that are of historical, archaeological, paleontological or architectural significance.

During the assessment, Aboriginal groups have the opportunity to comment on potential environmental effects of the project, share traditional knowledge and comment on the potential impacts of a project on their potential or established Aboriginal or Treaty rights.

#### Federal Funding Opportunities

Funding to support Aboriginal participation in environmental assessments and related consultation may be available under the Agency's Participant Funding Program.

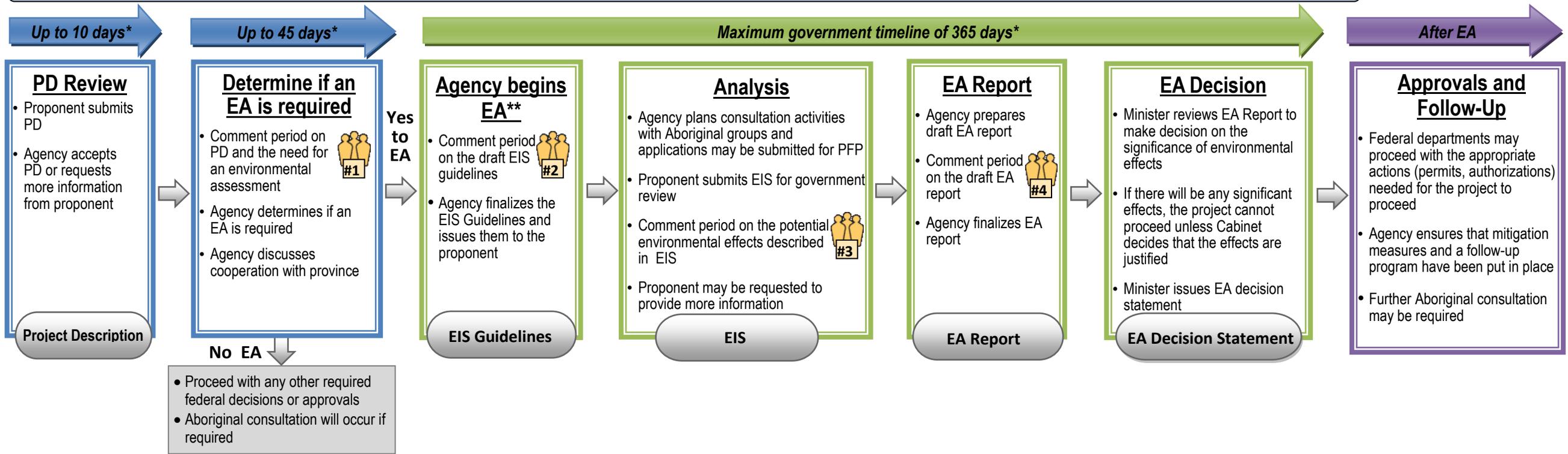
**For more information, please visit the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's website:**

**[www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca](http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca)**



# FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS BY AGENCY

Aboriginal consultation is integrated throughout the Environmental Assessment (EA) process to the extent possible



## Glossary

\* Timelines do not include time required by proponents to provide information.

\*\* The Minister has up to 60 days from the start of the EA to refer the project to a review panel.

**Comment periods:** Opportunities for the general public and Aboriginal groups to comment at various stages of the environmental assessment process.

: Deliverables

**Agency:** Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

**Proponent:** The proponent is the person, company or government who is planning a project.

**Project Description (PD):** A detailed description of the project being proposed by the proponent.

**Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Guidelines:** Document prepared by the Agency to outline the information the proponent must include in the Environmental Impact Statement.

**Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):** Document prepared by the proponent that identifies and assesses the potential environmental effects of the project and the measures proposed to lessen (mitigate) those effects.

**Participant Funding Program (PFP):** Program that provides financial support for individuals, non-profit organizations and Aboriginal groups who wish to participate in a federal environmental assessment.

**Environmental Assessment (EA) Report:** Report that includes the Agency's conclusions regarding the potential environmental effects of the project, the proposed mitigation measures and follow-up program requirements.

**EA Decision Statement:** A statement issued by the Minister of the Environment stating whether the proposed project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects and specifying mitigation and follow-up program.

**Environmental effects:** Changes to components of the environment caused by the project. Includes changes to fish or fish habitat, aquatic species, migratory birds and changes to the environment that occur on federal lands, cross boundaries or have specific effects on Aboriginal peoples.

Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre "Éléments de base de l'évaluation environnementale fédérale."

This pamphlet is intended for information purposes only. It is not a substitute for the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012) or any of its regulations. In the event of any inconsistency between this content and CEAA 2012 or its regulations, CEAA 2012 or its regulations, as the case may be, would prevail. More information is available at [www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca](http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca).