

## SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO MODERNIZE NOVA SCOTIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In 2021, the Government of Nova Scotia committed, in the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act*, to modernize the province's environmental assessment process. On May 8, 2025, the Environmental Assessment Regulations were amended to fulfill this commitment.

### WHY:

Changes to Nova Scotia's environmental assessment process will help ensure sustainable energy and economic security for Nova Scotians by speeding up our transition to clean energy. A move to clean energy will help us fight climate change faster.

The changes also respond to requests to make the process clearer, provide more time for review, help make projects easier to understand, and help people participate in the process in a more informed and meaningful way.

A modernized environmental assessment process supports the responsible use and development of our natural resources and will help transform Nova Scotia into a clean energy leader, while maintaining our high environmental standards.

Nova Scotians depend on the environment for drinking water, clean air to breathe, and to nourish their bodies, minds and souls. They can have confidence that it will be safeguarded for them, and for generations to come, while also allowing the development they depend on -- for jobs, a strong economy, clean energy, safe and modern roads and other infrastructure -- to happen in a safe and sustainable manner.

## CHANGES:

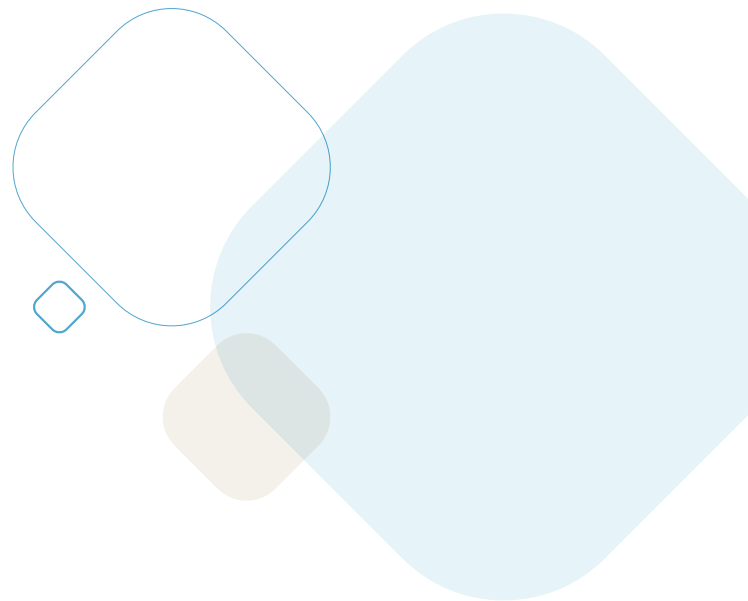
The regulatory changes are:

- Companies must provide information on both the positive and negative impacts of their project, with respect to climate change, which the Minister will use as one of the factors to be considered in making a decision.
- Clean energy and clean, low carbon fuel projects are now clearly identified as Class I projects.
- Larger biomass, biogas and clean fuel projects have been moved to Class I.
- Fast acting reliability generators, which are needed to stabilize the grid have been moved to Class I. Refer to the Nova Scotia Clean Power Plan for more information on how the province's grid is being stabilized.
- Small modular reactor projects, which were not previously listed in the regulations, have been added to Class I.
- Low emission, low-risk biomass fuel projects will now be managed solely – and safely -- through the Industrial Approval process.
- The consultation period for the public and the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia on Class 1 projects has been extended by 10 days for a total of 40 days, while maintaining the 50-day process.
- The Minister's ability to engage advisors, as needed, has been clarified; their role would be to help evaluate aspects of the project as required to help inform the Minister's decision.
- Companies now have more options to notify the public when they register their project for an environmental assessment. In addition to newspapers (which was the only permitted option before these changes), they can now use social media, websites, radio, email, flyers, mail outs and local bulletin boards to make sure the public is aware of a project being registered.
- Companies must now also provide information on the benefits of their project, in addition to the impacts, in their submission.
- Companies must provide a plain language summary of their project benefits and impacts, and how they plan to manage the impacts, to the Department of Environment and Climate Change, which will make this information public on its website.
- Language in the regulations has been updated, for example adding "hydrogen" as a type of fuel, updating department names and some terms.

## CHANGES:

The non-regulatory changes are:

- A new online hub for the Mi'kmaq, public, and industry that explains the environmental assessment process in plain language, includes videos and simplified information to help people understand how to participate.
- Clearer guidance documents and checklists to help companies understand environmental assessment requirements that emphasize the need for early and inclusive engagement with the Mi'kmaq and communities before projects are formally submitted.
- New plain language videos that help the public understand the process, the role of the company and government, and ways that they can participate.
- New mapping tool shows all approved environmental assessment projects since 2000 along with nearby protected areas, highways, Crown land, and predicted sea level rise, making it easier to see the big picture including the potential for cumulative impacts.





## BENEFITS

- ✓ upholds Nova Scotia's high environmental standards
- ✓ safeguards the environment, and human health and well-being
- ✓ prioritizes clean energy projects, the natural resources economy and the transition to a clean energy future
- ✓ supports innovation in the clean economy
- ✓ helps create new opportunities for Nova Scotia's forestry sector
- ✓ helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Nova Scotia
- ✓ helps to stabilize our power grid
- ✓ increases awareness and understanding of the environmental assessment process, how it works and how to participate in it in a more informed and meaningful way
- ✓ creates clarity and reduces undue regulatory burden for business
- ✓ saves time for business
- ✓ creates a stronger and more resilient province
- ✓ provides a more certain, clearer and more efficient regulatory path for companies
- ✓ makes it easier for companies to comply with our environmental requirements

## THE FACTS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- Crucial first step in the regulatory path for large-scale projects that Nova Scotians need to support housing, a strong economy, clean and more affordable energy, and technologies that rely on critical minerals, and having safe and modern infrastructure such as highways and roads.
- A planning tool that requires companies to identify and show both positive and negative impacts of their projects along with plans to mitigate any negative impacts.
- Approval decisions are based on science, evidence, data, facts, government review, and public and Mi'kmaq consultation.
- Depending on the nature of the project, a company typically requires additional approvals, which can provide other opportunities for consultation with the Mi'kmaq and the public, from the department, and other provincial or federal regulators.