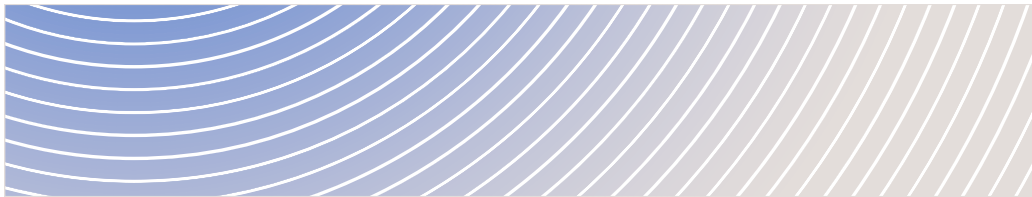


Cooperation Plan



FORDING RIVER EXTENSION PROJECT

March 9, 2026

Cooperation Plan

IMPACT ASSESSMENT AGENCY OF CANADA – BRITISH COLUMBIA
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OFFICE

IMPACT ASSESSMENT COOPERATION PLAN FOR
THE FORDING RIVER EXTENSION PROJECT

March 9, 2026

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1. Introduction

Following submission of a revised Detailed Project Description on July 4, 2025, the Chief Executive Assessment Officer issued a Readiness Decision determining that the Project would proceed to an environmental assessment. The Environmental Assessment Office's (EAO) reasons for this decision are provided in the [Readiness Decision Report](#) and [Reasons for Decision](#).

Following the suspension of the Planning Phase timeline on November 19, 2020, at the proponent's request to support coordination with the provincial process, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) resumed the federal timeline on October 20, 2025, upon accepting the revised Detailed Project Description and Response to the Summary of Issues. On October 24, 2025, IAAC determined that a federal impact assessment is required for the Project pursuant to subsection 16(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act*.

2. Purpose

This Cooperation Plan (the Plan) was jointly developed by IAAC and the EAO to set out intentions and plans for a coordinated assessment process for the Project¹. A coordinated assessment process aims to align the provincial environmental assessment and federal impact assessment processes where possible. A coordinated process provides for an efficient process for all participants, including through the coordinated review of proponent information, the development of joint documents, hosting of joint activities, and transparent sharing of information. Nothing in this plan creates or alters any powers or duties set out in federal or provincial legislation.

IAAC and the EAO will collaborate with potentially affected Indigenous nations and will coordinate on Crown consultation and engagement activities to the extent possible to reduce the burden on Indigenous nations via efficient communication. For information on Crown consultation and engagement activities, please see the Project's Joint Assessment and Engagement Plan.

Similarly, IAAC and the EAO will work together when engaging with the public. For information on public participation and engagement activities, please see the Project's Joint Assessment and Engagement Plan.

¹ The EAO has not requested substitution of the federal assessment for the Project to the provincial process, nor has the assessment been referred to Review Panel. In both the federal and provincial processes, any referral of a project to assessment by Review Panel would occur after the determination of whether a federal impact assessment is required and as part of the provincial EA Readiness Decision.

IAAC and the EAO have also worked together to identify the permits, licenses, and authorizations that may be required for the Project in order to facilitate an efficient transition to additional regulatory processes subsequent to this coordinated assessment process if a provincial Environmental Assessment Certificate and federal Decision Statement allow the Project to proceed. For information on regulatory processes, please see the Project's Joint Detailed Permitting Plan (the Permitting Plan).

3. Project Overview

EVR Operations Limited (the proponent) has proposed the Fording River Extension Project (the Project), an expansion of its Fording River Operations (FRO) metallurgical coal mine. The Project is located 30 kilometres north of Elkford, British Columbia (BC), five kilometres west of the BC-Alberta border and 130 kilometres north of the Canada-United States border. The purpose of the Project is to gain access to an adjacent deposit of economically mineable coal to the south of the existing FRO on Castle Mountain. The Project would allow FRO to maintain an average production rate of nine million metric tonnes of clean coal per year. The proponent anticipates that the primary source of steelmaking coal for FRO would come from the Project by the late 2030s and maintain existing production levels of FRO through to the early 2060s.

4. Approach to Cooperation

Through cooperation, IAAC and the EAO will strive to increase efficiency and certainty for the proponent, the public, and Indigenous nations, and ensure that the best available expertise is shared and applied to both assessments for the Project. This Plan is intended to be flexible and does not preclude IAAC or the EAO from making changes to the cooperative approach described in this Plan to accommodate changes that may occur during the assessment process. Each jurisdiction retains its own decision on the Project.

Where possible, the Plan will follow the [*Impact Assessment Cooperation Agreement Between Canada and British Columbia*](#) (the Agreement; 2019). The Agreement provides a framework for IAAC and the EAO to work together when an assessment of a project is required by both levels of government. The Agreement helps guide a more predictable and timely process, increased efficiency and certainty, harmonized timelines, reduced regulatory burden, and quality assessments that draw on the best available expertise, supporting the shared principle of “one project-one review”. This Plan includes project-specific descriptions of coordinated activities, deliverables and methods for coordination.

5. Gathering and Review of Project Information

IAAC and the EAO will coordinate activities related to the collection and review of information provided by the proponent, Indigenous nations, technical advisors, and the public. Coordinated activities will include, where possible, shared Project communications to participants, as well as joint meetings, committees, public comment periods, and comment tracking tables.

Table 1 in Annex 1 identifies the factors to be considered by both IAAC and the EAO where there exist opportunities for the exchange of information and expert advice while reducing duplication.

Project information and participant input will be gathered from the following sources:

- A single Impact Statement/Application – Prepared by the proponent to meet both federal and provincial requirements. This document will be referred to as the Application.
- Joint Crown consultation and engagement with Indigenous nations – Please see the Project’s Joint Assessment and Engagement Plan which includes information on consultation, engagement and partnership activities and opportunities.
- Technical Advisory Committee – IAAC and the EAO will create a joint committee (established by the provincial Process Order) to provide expert advice to the coordinated assessment process. Technical advisors will include provincial and federal experts and regulators, Indigenous nations, experts from local governments, and representatives from the United States². The Technical Advisory Committee is the forum for the detailed, technical review of the proponent’s documents and technical studies.
- Community Advisory Committee – The purpose of the Community Advisory Committee is to provide a venue for communities to advise IAAC and the EAO on the potential effects of the proposed Project, for communities to stay up to date on the progress of the assessment, and for communities to be informed of opportunities to provide their input and advice. The format and structure of a Community Advisory Committee will depend on the potential effects of a project determined during the Process Planning/Planning phase and community interest in a project, amongst other

² Representatives from the United States will be invited to serve on the Technical Advisory Committee including the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the State of Montana Department of Environmental Quality as well as the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho as per the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between British Columbia and Montana (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/environmental-assessments/working-with-other-agencies/bc_montana_mou.pdf).

considerations. The starting point for the Community Advisory Committee in every environmental assessment will be a digital subscription service established by the EAO for each project where there is sufficient community interest, which will likely be the majority of environmental assessments. For further information on public participation and engagement activities, please see the Project's Joint Assessment and Engagement Plan.

6. Federal and Provincial Processes, Timelines, and Key Deliverables and Activities

Key Deliverables and Activities

IAAC and the EAO have agreed to undertake their respective assessment processes in a coordinated manner such that key milestones, deliverables and activities are aligned to the extent possible.

Timelines

Beyond the Impact Assessment Determination and Readiness Decision, process timelines may need to be adjusted to ensure the federal and provincial processes remain aligned. This may include:

- Timeline suspensions of the federal process at the request of the proponent.
- Timeline extension of the federal process by request from the EAO or another jurisdiction.
- Timeline extension of the provincial process by the EAO, by the statutory decision-maker's own initiative or on application by the proponent or a participating Indigenous nation.

This Plan recognizes that the alignment of respective timelines is subject to the legislative obligations prescribed in the *Impact Assessment Act* and the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018), as well as the completeness and sufficiency of any information submitted by the proponent.

IAAC and the EAO will share information in a timely manner, particularly information gathered throughout the assessment of the Project, such as information received through Crown consultation and engagement, public comments, and existing regional or strategic assessments or initiatives, or other relevant studies. IAAC and the EAO will respect requirements related to privacy and protection, including protection of Indigenous Knowledge, when sharing or publicly posting information.

Federal and Provincial Processes

To date, IAAC and the EAO have coordinated every aspect of the process including the preparation of joint plans and joint guidelines that will guide the remainder of the assessment process for the Project. IAAC and the EAO have also coordinated public participation opportunities and Indigenous engagement.

A. Application Development and Review Phase

Purpose

The coordinated Application Development and Review Phase encompasses the Impact Statement phase of the federal process and the Application Development and Review phases of the provincial process.

The purpose of the Application Development and Review Phase is twofold. First, it is an opportunity for the proponent to work with Indigenous nations, the Technical Advisory Committee, Community Advisory Committee, and other participants to inform the development of its consolidated Application that meets both jurisdictions' requirements. Second, EAO and IAAC facilitate a detailed technical review of the Application, once it is submitted.

Key Deliverables and Activities

The key deliverables and activities that will be coordinated where possible during the Application Development and Review Phases are:

- Application – Prepared by the proponent and addresses federal and provincial requirements outlined in the AIR.
- Verification Review – IAAC will conduct a review to confirm that the Application provides sufficient information on federal requirements set out in the AIR to be ready for public comment and technical review. Once IAAC completes this verification, the proponent will submit the Application to both the IAAC and EAO to initiate the Application Review stage.
- Crown Consultation – IAAC and the EAO will work to coordinate consultation and engagement activities with Indigenous nations including meetings and review periods.
- Public Engagement – IAAC and the EAO will work to coordinate engagement activities including public comment periods.
- Technical Review – IAAC and the EAO will work with the proponent, Technical Advisory Committee, and Indigenous nations to coordinate the technical review of the Application and consider public comments.

- Notice Regarding Application Review per Section 27(2)(b) of the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018) – After technical review of the Application has been complete, the EAO will provide the proponent with direction on deficiencies that need to be addressed in its revised Application (if required).
- Revised Application – The proponent submits an updated revised Application based on the direction provided in the Section 27(2)(b) Notice.
- Acceptance of Application – IAAC and EAO will review the Revised Application and each determine whether it can be accepted.

Timeline Management

Under the *Impact Assessment Act*, the proponent has up to three years to prepare an Impact Statement/Application from the posting of the Notice of Commencement. Subsection 19(2) of the *Impact Assessment Act* permits IAAC to extend the time limit of the Impact Statement phase beyond three years at the request of the proponent.

Under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018), the proponent has up to three years to prepare an Application. Once an Application is submitted, direction to the proponent must be issued within 180 days via a Notice Regarding Application Review per Section 27(2)(b) of the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018) on how to prepare the revised Application, including the results of public engagement and matters respecting advice provided by the Technical Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Committee. Once the Section 27(2)(b) Notice is issued, the proponent has up to one year to submit their Application. Section 38 of the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018) authorizes the provincial Minister or chief executive assessment officer to extend any of these time limits, upon request or on their own initiative.

IAAC and the EAO will work together to coordinate the process steps and activities during this phase in order to meet their respective requirements and timelines.

Sharing of Information

IAAC and the EAO will share the following information obtained during this assessment phase:

- Review of Application (initial and potentially revised).
- Comments on the Application, and comment tracking tables.
- Proponent responses to comments on the Application, and comments from tracking tables.
- Public and Community Advisory Committee comments.

B. Effects Assessment Phase

Purpose

The coordinated Effects Assessment phase encompasses the Impact Assessment Phase of the federal process and the Effects Assessment and Recommendation phase of the provincial process.

The purpose of the coordinated Effects Assessment phase is to consider potential positive and negative environmental, health, cultural, social and economic impacts of the Project and prepare a report describing those effects.

Key Deliverables and Activities

The key deliverables and activities that will be coordinated where possible during the Effects Assessment phase are:

- Joint Draft Assessment Report (Draft Assessment Report) – IAAC and the EAO intend to develop a joint Assessment Report, unless the Chief Executive Assessment Officer of the EAO or delegate and the President of IAAC or delegate agree that joint preparation of the assessment reports is not practicable or appropriate in the circumstances, as described in the Agreement. Along with the Draft Assessment Report, draft potential federal and provincial conditions will be developed collaboratively to ensure consistency of conditions and improve regulatory efficiencies. Conditions issued as part of a federal Decision Statement and provincial Environmental Assessment Certificate will correspond to the relevant area of jurisdiction.
- Crown Consultation – IAAC and the EAO will work to coordinate consultation and engagement activities with Indigenous nations on the Draft Assessment Report and conditions including meetings and a joint comment period.
- Public Engagement – IAAC and the EAO will work to coordinate engagement activities on the Draft Assessment Report and conditions including a joint public comment period.
- Joint Final Assessment Report – IAAC and the EAO intend to develop a Joint Final Assessment Report that considers the Crown consultation and public engagement on the Draft Assessment Report.

Timeline Management

Prior to the commencement of the Impact Assessment, subsection 28(5) of the *Impact Assessment Act* permits IAAC to set a longer or shorter time limit for the Impact Assessment Phase to allow for the cooperation with another jurisdiction or to take into account circumstances that are specific to the Project. Since the time limit for the Impact Assessment

Phase for the Project was not adjusted, there will be the standard time limit of up to 300 days for the Impact Assessment Phase.

Subsection 28(6) of the *Impact Assessment Act* permits the federal Minister of the Environment, Climate Change, and Nature to extend the time limit of the Impact Assessment Phase up to a maximum of 90 days to permit IAAC to cooperate with another jurisdiction or to take into account circumstances that are specific to the Project.

Once the Application is accepted for review under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018), the EAO has 150 days to finalize the Assessment Report, Environmental Assessment Certificate, and other referral material. Subsection 38 of the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018) authorizes the provincial Minister or Chief Executive Assessment Officer to extend any of these time limits, upon request or on their own initiative.

Sharing of Information

IAAC and the EAO will share the following information obtained during this assessment phase:

- Public, technical advisor, and Indigenous comments.
- Draft Assessment Report and draft potential federal and provincial conditions.
- Comments on the Application and proponent responses.
- Comment tracking tables.

C. Decision Phase

The purpose of the Decision phase is for the federal and provincial Ministers to determine whether the Project may proceed within their respective jurisdictions. The federal Minister will determine whether the Project's effects within federal jurisdiction are likely to be, to some extent, significant, and whether these effects are justified in the public interest. The federal decision is communicated to the proponent through a Decision Statement. The Decision Statement sets out the conditions the proponent must adhere to should the Project be allowed to proceed. Provincially, the Ministers will determine whether to issue an environmental assessment certificate for the Project and are required to publish reasons for decision. Each jurisdiction will retain its own decision, and will work to keep each other informed of the decision's timeline. Once provided with the relevant materials, the Ministers of each jurisdiction will issue a decision within 30 days. Should the federal Minister need an extension or a Governor in Council consideration be required (90 days) as part of the federal process, IAAC will inform the EAO. Section 38 of the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018) allows the Decision timeline to be extended, should the provincial Ministers require it. IAAC and the EAO will coordinate announcements of the decisions, to the extent possible.

D. Post Decision/Post-Certificate Phase (if an Environmental Assessment Certificate and Decision Statement is Issued)

Each jurisdiction will retain the required permitting process and implementation of conditions, with variable timelines.

7. Contact Information

The EAO's office designated for administering the environmental assessment of the Project is:

British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office
PO Box 9426 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C., V8W 9V1
Email: EAO.FRX@gov.bc.ca

The IAAC office designated for administering the impact assessment of the Project is:

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
Pacific and Yukon Region
1800 – 1138 Melville Street
Vancouver, BC, V6E 4S3
Telephone: 604-666-2431
Email: fording@jaac-aeic.gc.ca

ANNEX I – List of Common Factors

Table 1 – List of Common Factors to Consider by IAAC and the EAO

Factors to Consider (IAAC)	Factors to Consider (the EAO)
s. 22(1) (a) The changes to the environment or to health, social or economic conditions and the positive and negative consequences of these changes that are likely to be caused by the carrying out of the designated project	s.25(2)(a) positive and negative direct and indirect effects of the reviewable project, including environmental, economic, social, cultural and health effects and adverse cumulative effects.
s. 22(1) (b) Mitigation measures that are technically and economically feasible and that would mitigate any adverse effects of the designated project.	The EAO's Application Information Requirements guidelines require that an Application for an EA Certificate "describe any standard mitigation to be implemented, including consideration of best management practices, environmental management plans, environmental protection plans, contingency plans, emergency response plans and other general practices"
s. 22(1) (c) The impact that the designated project may have on any Indigenous group and any adverse impact that the designated project may have on the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Canada recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act	s.25(1) The effects of a project on Indigenous peoples and rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 must be assessed in every assessment.
s. 22(1) (e) alternative means of carrying out the designated project that are technically and economically feasible, including through the use of best available technologies, and the effects of those means	s.25(2)(i) alternative means of carrying out the project that are technically and economically feasible, including through the use of the best available technologies, and the potential effects, risks and uncertainties of those alternatives.
s. 22(1) (g) Indigenous knowledge provided with respect to the designated project.	s.2(2)(b)(i)(C) the purpose of the EAO is to promote sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a sound economy and the well-being of British Columbians and their communities by using the best available science, Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge in decision making under the Act.
s. 22(1) (h) The extent to which the designated project contributes to sustainability.	s.2(2)(b)(i) the purpose of the EAO is to promote sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a sound economy and the well-being of British Columbians and their communities. AND s. 29(2) A referral under subsection (1) must be made no later than 150 days from acceptance of a proponent's revised

Factors to Consider (IAAC)	Factors to Consider (the EAO)
	<p>application and be accompanied by all of the following:</p> <p>(b) recommendations respecting the ministers' decision under subsection (4) of this section, including:</p> <p>(i) recommendations respecting whether the project is consistent with the promotion of sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a sound economy and the well-being of British Columbias and their communities,</p> <p>(ii) recommendations respecting the matters referred to in section 25.</p>
<p>s. 22(1) (i) The extent to which the effects of the designated project hinder or contribute to the Government of Canada's ability to meet its environmental obligations and its commitments in respect of climate change</p>	<p>s.25(2)(h) greenhouse gas emissions, including the potential effects on the province being able to meet its targets under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act.</p>
<p>s. 22(1) (j) Any change to the designated project that may be caused by the environment.</p>	<p>s.25(2)(j) potential changes to the reviewable project that may be caused by the environment.</p>
<p>s. 22(1) (k) The requirements of the follow-up program in respect of the designated project.</p>	<p>The EAO's Application Information Requirements guidelines state: "Where a positive or negative residual effect and/or cumulative effect has been identified for a VC, the Application must include a description of a follow-up strategy".</p>
<p>s. 22(1) (l) Considerations related to Indigenous cultures raised with respect to the designated project.</p>	<p>s.25(1) The effects of a project on Indigenous peoples and rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.</p>
<p>s. 22(1) (m) Community knowledge provided with respect to the designated project.</p>	<p>s.2(2)(b)(i)(C) the purpose of the EAO is to promote sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a sound economy and the well-being of British Columbias and their communities by using the best available science, Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge in decision making under the Act</p> <p>AND</p> <p>s.22(1) For an assessment or a class of assessments, the chief executive assessment officer must, if the chief executive assessment officer considers that there is sufficient community interest in a project, establish one or more community advisory committees to advise the chief executive assessment officer on the</p>

Factors to Consider (IAAC)	Factors to Consider (the EAO)
	potential effects of the applicable project or class of projects on the community.
s. 22(1) (n) Comments received from the public.	<p>s.2(2)(b)(i)(B) the purpose of the EAO is to promote sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a sound economy and the well-being of British Columbians and their communities by facilitating meaningful public participation throughout assessments</p> <p>AND</p> <p>s.27 (2) Within 180 days of receiving an application under subsection (1), the chief executive assessment officer must</p> <p>(a) publish an application received under subsection (1) for 30 days and invite comment from the public on the application, and</p> <p>(b) provide notice to the proponent</p> <p>(i) of the results of the invitation made under paragraph (a),</p> <p>AND</p> <p>s.28(2) On completion of the assessment, the chief executive assessment officer or assessment body, as applicable, must do all of the following:</p> <p>(a) prepare the following:</p> <p>(i) a draft assessment report;</p> <p>(ii) a draft environmental assessment certificate, with certificate conditions and project description;</p> <p>(b) publish the documents referred to in paragraph (a) for at least 30 days and invite comment from the public on those documents;</p> <p>(c) consider the public comments received and prepare final versions of the documents referred to in paragraph (a), adjusting those documents as the chief executive assessment officer or assessment body, as applicable, considers appropriate.</p>
s. 22(1) (o) Comments from a jurisdiction that are received in the course of consultations.	s. 19(3) The chief executive assessment officer's discretion under subsection (2) includes, but is not limited to, the discretion to specify by order one or more of the following:

Factors to Consider (IAAC)	Factors to Consider (the EAO)
	<p>(c) the persons or organizations, including but not limited to the public, Indigenous nations, government agencies and neighbouring jurisdictions, to be consulted by the proponent or the office during the assessment, and the means by which the persons and organizations are to be provided with notice of the assessment, access to information during the assessment and opportunities to be consulted;</p> <p>(d) the opportunities for the persons and organizations specified under paragraph (c), and for the proponent, to provide comments during the assessment of the reviewable project.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>s. 21 (1) For every assessment, the chief executive assessment officer must establish a technical advisory committee</p> <p>(a) to advise the chief executive assessment officer and participating Indigenous peoples on technical matters related to the assessment, and</p> <p>(b) to review the proponent's application under section 27.</p>
<p>s. 22(1) (q) Any assessment of the effects of the designated project that is conducted by or on behalf of an Indigenous governing body and that is provided with respect to the designated project.</p>	<p>s.25(1) The effects of a project on Indigenous peoples and rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>s.19(4) If a participating Indigenous nation notifies the chief executive assessment officer of the nation's intent to carry out an assessment with respect to the potential effects of the project on the nation and on its rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the <i>Constitution Act, 1982</i>, the chief executive assessment officer, in the order made under subsection (2), must specify</p> <p>(a) the portion of the assessment to be carried out by the nation, and</p> <p>(b) the date by which the assessment by the nation must be completed.</p>
<p>s. 22(1) (r) Any study or plan that is conducted or prepared by a jurisdiction — or an Indigenous governing body — that is in respect of a region related to the designated</p>	<p>s.25(2)(g) consistency with any land-use plan of the government or an Indigenous nation if the plan is relevant to the</p>

Factors to Consider (IAAC)	Factors to Consider (the EAO)
project and that has been provided with respect to the project.	assessment and to any assessment conducted under section 35 or 73.
s. 22(1) (s) The intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors.	s.25(2)(d) disproportionate effects on distinct human populations, including populations identified by gender