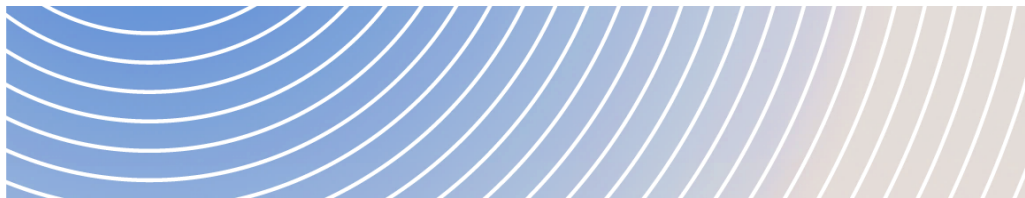




Impact Assessment
Agency of Canada

Agence d'évaluation
d'impact du Canada

Public Participation Plan



Regional Assessment of the St. Lawrence River Area

September 2, 2026



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1 Introduction

This Public Participation Plan (hereinafter referred to as “the Plan”) was developed by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) in collaboration with the St. Lawrence Regional Assessment (SLRA) working group members to explain the opportunities for public participation during the SLRA process.

The Plan is designed to be flexible and may be modified to reflect the evolution of the SLRA based on the [Framework: Public Participation Under the *Impact Assessment Act*](#) taking into account public feedback received during SLRA engagement activities.

Please note that a separate plan for First Nations and Indigenous organizations has been developed and is posted on the Registry. The [Indigenous Engagement and Participation Plan](#) outline the engagement opportunities and related approaches specific to participating First Nations and Indigenous organizations to the SLRA.

2 Context

First Nations have a long history of inhabiting and using the St. Lawrence River and its banks, as Quebecers in general. Over the centuries, First Nations and riverside communities have used them for fishing, trade, transportation, and as gathering places. The St. Lawrence River has always been at the heart of life for First Nations and Quebecers, serving in turn as a transportation route, a source of sustenance, an economic driver, and a symbol of identity. The St. Lawrence River, which is an essential waterway connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, is recognized by the St. Lawrence economic development council as a significant economic asset facilitating the transport of goods and international trade.

On July 29, 2020, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) requested a regional assessment of the river, emphasizing that the cumulative effects of development were not being considered in project assessments. The MCK wants future assessments to aim at improving the environment and addressing historical impacts.

In his response of October 27, 2020, the Minister determined that there is potential merit in conducting such a regional assessment that further analysis and engagement would be necessary before deciding to move forwards. The Minister instructed IAAC to initiate an engagement process. Following this engagement process, July 15, 2021, the Minister decided to proceed with the SLRA and instructed IAAC to begin the Planning Phase. On December 17, 2024, the Minister confirmed his commitment to move forward and



authorized IAAC to conduct the SLRA in partnership with MCK and other interested First Nations in the region.

On August 27, 2026, the First Nations partners and the Minister approved the SLRA's Terms of Reference, that identifies how the SLRA will be conducted. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the SLRA First Nation partners, along with IAAC, have formed a working group that will be responsible for delivering on the SLRA. Section 6 of the Terms of Reference states that the working group will develop and implement engagement plans to ensure that Indigenous Peoples (other than First Nation partners) and the public have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the regional assessment.

The main goal of the SLRA is to gain more insight into the state of the St. Lawrence River within the assessment area by assessing the relationships between targeted physical activities, complementary activities, and the ecosystems within which they occur. In this way, a set of baseline and targeted conditions, which take into account both Indigenous Knowledge and Western science, can be established to better evaluate the effects of activities (past, existing, and future). This set of conditions will help identify strategies for these activities and other efforts to achieve environmental and social gains that improve upon present-day conditions in an efficient, collaborative manner.

3 Process & Objectives

This plan outlines the ways in which members of the public can share their feedback and take part in the SLRA process, which can be seen as an opportunity to collaborate, discuss a shared concern, and reflect together on the health of the St. Lawrence River.

3.1 SLRA Process

The SLRA phases of the process include pre-decision, planning, conduct, and submission of the SLRA final report to the Minister and First Nations partners Chiefs.

During the pre-decision phase (2020-2021), IAAC undertook engagement with Indigenous peoples, federal and provincial authorities, non-governmental organizations, and the public regarding a potential regional assessment of the St. Lawrence river area. The [*What We Heard*](#) report summarizes the findings. The [Terms of Reference](#) were developed in the planning phase (2022-2026) as well as the methodology. Public participation opportunities during these two phases included:

Participating in information sessions;

Providing views on the request for a regional assessment;



Providing comments on the draft Terms of Reference;

Being added to the distribution list; and

Ongoing dialogue with IAAC's SLRA team.

Table 1 provides an overview of the planned engagement activities for the SLRA conduct phase, which will be held from Summer 2026 to Winter 2029.

For more information on the SLRA or to read submitted comments and other materials, please visit the SLRA project page on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry: [*Regional Assessment of the St. Lawrence River Area*](#).

3.2 Objectives

To meet the requirements and policies of the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) regarding public participation within regional assessments, it is essential to the SLRA Working Group to ensure that the public has the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the SLRA process by:

- Individuals, organizations, or groups who wish to participate in the SLRA have the opportunity to do so, have access to information, and possess the capacity to participate in an informed matter.
- Public input is handled in a way that allows participants to see that their contributions have been considered.
- Participants are engaged in ways that remove barriers to ensure full participation from all demographic groups, including, but not limited to, women, Indigenous Peoples, racialized communities, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, newcomers, seniors, and youth. This may include offering accessible venues and virtual options and considering barriers related to language, caregiving responsibilities, transportation, access to technology, cultural considerations, and accessibility needs.
- Public participation activities will seek to obtain perspectives from diverse population groups that may experience the effects of development activities differently, including groups that may be disproportionately affected or face barriers to accessing potential benefits.
- The SLRA Working Group ensures that opportunities for participation are provided throughout the key stages of the process. Meetings will be conducted in such a way that everyone can express their views freely and respectfully.
- Public participation methods are implemented based on the needs and interests of the public. Where appropriate, participation approaches may be tailored to facilitate



input from specific groups and communities whose perspectives may not otherwise be captured through general public engagement activities. These may include, but are not limited to, public comment period on draft documents, and public information held in person or virtually.

- Public input received during participation activities will be documented, made publicly available on the Registry, and potentially on other data-sharing platforms established by the IAAC and the SLRA Working Group, and will inform the SLRA work and its final report.
- Information gathered through public participation activities may help inform the consideration of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), including understanding how regional environmental, health, social, and economic effects may be experienced differently by diverse groups of people.

4 Stakeholder Identification

The following list includes communities, associations, and other stakeholders that IAAC has identified as potentially interested in the project or who have expressed interest in participating in the SLRA:

- Centre québécois du droit de l'environnement (CQDE)
- Citizens
- Comité ZIP du lac Saint-Pierre
- Comité ZIP du Sud-de-l'Estuaire
- Comité ZIP de Québec et Chaudière-Appalaches
- Comité ZIP Gaspésie
- Comité ZIP Jacques-Cartier
- Comité ZIP Côte-Nord du Golfe
- Comité ZIP des Seigneuries
- Comité ZIP Les Deux Rives
- Comité ZIP Saguenay - Charlevoix
- Conseil régional de l'environnement de la Capitale nationale
- East Coast Environmental Law Association
- Eau Secours! La Coalition québécoise pour une gestion responsable de l'eau
- Fondation Rivières
- Northern Institute for Research in Environment and Occupational Health and Safety (INREST)
- Nature Québec



- Observatoire international des droits de la nature
- Organisme des bassins versants de la Capitale
- Regroupement national des conseils régionaux de l'environnement du Québec
- Réseau Québec Maritime in trust to Université Laval
- St. Lawrence Economic Development Council
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) – Québec Section
- Société pour vaincre la pollution
- Stratégies Saint-Laurent
- Université Laval

5 Engagement and Participation Tools

To ensure that the public has the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the SLRA, the following communication and participation tools may be used:

- Public notices posted on the [SLRA Registry page](#) and sometimes published in newspapers and broadcasted on the radio;
- Email communications sent to the distribution list;
- Updates on social media (e.g., posts on IAAC's Facebook, X (formally Twitter), and LinkedIn accounts) providing information and updates on the process, announcing public participation opportunities, and funding opportunities;
- Inventories of existing and relevant information related to the SLRA;
- Interactive community sessions;
- Targeted engagement sessions or discussion groups, where appropriate, to facilitate participation from groups that may experience differential effects or face barriers to participation;
- Virtual sessions with a presentation for the public and a Q&A period. These sessions would be streamed live online. Links to access the presentation will be posted on the SLRA Registry [Information Sessions](#) page and sent to the distribution list;
- [Subscribe](#) to Registry notifications.

Note that the list of tools is not exhaustive, and other tools may be used during the SLRA to facilitate participation and ensure the effective conduct of the process.

In terms of accessibility, IAAC must ensure that documents posted on the Registry are accessible to individuals with visual impairments, that is, they must be formatted to allow screen readers to read the content aloud. If a participant has additional accessibility needs that have not yet been addressed, please don't hesitate to contact us – the SLRA aims to ensure that everyone can participate fully.



Documents produced by the SLRA working group will be available in both official languages. Simultaneous translation will be provided during public sessions, unless sessions are offered separately in each official language.

5.1 Financial Aid

Financial assistance is available to support public participation throughout the SLRA process. For information on activities eligible for funding or to apply for funding, please visit the [Participant Funding Program website](#), or send an email to fp-paf@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

5.2 Distribution List

Throughout the process, IAAC will be managing a distribution list specific to the SLRA. Individuals and organizations on the distribution list will receive regular update and notices about the progress of the SLRA.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list, please send your full name, the name of your organization (if applicable), and your email address to the following email: stlawrence-saintlaurent@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

For those who have already requested to be added to the distribution list, either by signing up on the Registry¹ or by attending an information session during the pre-decision or planning phase of the participation process, they do not need to register again, as their names are already on the distribution list.

To view all comments received to date, please consult the [Comments](#) of the SLRA Registry page.

5.3 Approach to Activities

Table 1 outlines the objectives of the SLRA conduct phase as well as the engagement activities that may take place during this phase of the SLRA, as well as the public engagement tools and timelines.

Interested parties, such as the public, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, etc. are invited to participate in the engagement described below.

¹ Subscribing to a distribution list is no longer a feature available on the Registry. However, if you registered before the feature was deactivated, you are already on our list.



As previously mentioned, a separate Indigenous Engagement and Participation Plan has also been developed to specifically ensure that Indigenous Peoples have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the SLRA.

Engagement objectives throughout the SLRA conduct phase are as follows:

- Comply with the requirements of the IAA and applicable policies related to public participation in a regional assessment.
- Ensure meaningful public participation, including offering opportunities to contribute. For example, contribute to information gathering and to proposing useful and applicable approaches that can inform findings and recommendations for the SLRA.
- Explicitly and transparently integrate public participation to inform the SLRA report and guide future impact and environmental assessments.
- Notify participants of key points in the process when they will have opportunities to participate.
- Make all relevant SLRA documentation available to participants.



Table 1: Approaches and activities for public participation during the Conduct Phase (up to 30 months, Summer 2026-Winter 2029)

Activities	Timeline	Participation Tools
Announcement of funding under the IAAC's Participant Funding Program for the SLRA conduct phase	Summer-Fall 2026	- Public notices, notices, and emails to announce participation opportunities and public comment periods. - Posting of information session schedule - A summary will be posted on the Registry in both official languages. - Procedures for handling confidential information, if applicable. - Ongoing use of the Registry to provide the public with access to information that enables meaningful participation. - Notices and press releases announcing the submission of the report to the Minister.
- Information session with the public, either targeted or general, in person or remotely. - Ongoing posting of documents relevant to the SLRA and comments received on the Registry. - Other specific activities will be identified and developed as the work progresses, based on ongoing engagement and emerging needs.	Ongoing, as needed	
Public comment period on Assessment Priorities	Spring 2027	
Public comment period on a draft version of the SLRA report.	Fall 2028	
Posting of the final SLRA report on the Registry	Spring 2029: following the consideration of comments by the Working Group	
Posting on the Registry of all Minister's responses	After the Minister's answer	

Table Description: An overview of the activities and approaches planned or undertaken to support public participation during conduct phase of the SLRA. **Note:** The list in the table is not exhaustive, and other activities may take place during the conduct phase of the SLRA.



6 Collaboration with Federal Authorities

In conducting the SLRA, the SLRA Working Group will take into account the expertise and knowledge of many federal departments, which have an obligation to provide relevant information and within the time specified under the provisions of the IAA and the SLRA Terms of Reference. IAAC will engage federal departments and agencies in a timely and transparent manner to carry out SLRA work. This information will be requested in writing or during meetings with the authorities concerned. In both cases, IAAC will ensure that applicable documentation is made available to the public (subject to confidentiality considerations). All links to the information provided will be posted on the SLRA Registry page.

7 Confidentiality Procedure

Comments and other documents received by the SLRA Working Group throughout the SLRA process will be posted on the Registry, except for those deemed confidential or subject to a non-disclosure agreement. IAAC's [Submission Policy](#) determines which submitted information may be made public and which should remain confidential. For more information on how IAAC protects confidentiality, please consult the [Privacy Notice](#).

If a participant does not wish for their information and/or comments to be published on the Registry, IAAC must be informed before the submission of comments or documents (stlawrence-saintlaurent@iaac-aeic.gc.ca).

Additionally, Indigenous Knowledge shared in confidence is protected from disclosure under section 119 of the IAA, unless written consent is provided.

8 Submitting Comments and Contact Information

Comments can be submitted at any time during the SLRA process using the [Submit a Comment](#) feature available on the [SLRA Registry page](#). Documents can also be uploaded using this feature. If you experience any difficulties submitting your comments, please contact IAAC and the working group by email at stlawrence-saintlaurent@iaac-aeic.gc.ca. Comments may also be submitted by email or by mail.

For any questions or requests for information, please contact us at:

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