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June 30, 2021

ELECTRONIC MAIL

Request for Provincial Input

Brianne England, Manager of Applications
Environmental Assessment & Stewardship
Ministry of Environment
Brianne.english@gov.sk.ca

Subject: Designation Request for the Proposed Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Projects under the *Impact Assessment Act*

Dear Brianne England:

On June 18, 2021, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (the Minister) received a request to designate the proposed Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Projects (the Project) under subsection 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA).

The purpose of this correspondence is to inform your ministry of the designation requests and to seek your input regarding provincial regulatory processes in relation to the Project, and any associated assessment of effects and public and Indigenous consultation.

The Proposed Project

The Project would be located in the area surrounding Lake Diefenbaker. The Project involves the construction and operation of three irrigation projects resulting in upwards of 202,343 hectares (500,000 acres) of irrigable land (enclosure 2). Phase 1 would take place to the northwest of Lake Diefenbaker and would complete the Westside irrigation canal system that was discontinued in 1973 and provide 32,375 hectares (80,000 acres) of irrigable land. Phase 2 would further expand the Westside irrigation phase and provide irrigation near the towns of Zealandia to the west and Asquith to the north. Phase 2 would increase the amount of irrigable land by 105,218 hectares (260,000 acres). Combined, Phases 1 and 2 would include nearly 400 km of canals plus pipelines and three balancing

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reservoirs. Phase 3 is the development of the Qu'Appelle South Irrigation system to the south of Lake Diefenbaker. Phase 3 would provide water for multiple uses including irrigation for up to 48,562 hectares (120,000 acres), and would include approximately 100 km of canals, a balancing reservoir, and an outfall structure into Buffalo Pound Lake.

Based on the information available to the Agency, Phases 1 and 2 as proposed do not appear to be described in the *Physical Activities Regulations*. As such, and unless limitations of the authority are found to have been met, the physical activity of both Phases 1 and 2 will be considered for designation at this time.

Phase 3 is in its conceptual phase. Based on preliminary information available to the Agency, it is likely a designated Project as described in the *Physical Activities Regulations*. The Agency will review further information as it is available from the Proponent and make a determination on the applicability of the IAA. The impact assessment process under IAA only applies to designated projects.

Enclosed with this letter is a project map from the Water Security Agency website (enclosure 1). Publically available information can be accessed on the proponent's website for the Project at the following link:
<https://www.wsask.ca/About-WSA/Lake-Diefenbaker-Irrigation-Project/>

Designation Request

Under subsection 9(1) of IAA the Minister may, by order, designate a physical activity that is not prescribed in the *Physical Activities Regulations*. The Minister may do this, if, in the Minister's opinion, the physical activity may cause adverse effects within federal jurisdiction or adverse direct or incidental effects (resulting from a federal decision), or public concerns related to those effects warrant the designation. In accordance with subsection 9(4) of IAA, it is expected that the Minister will respond, with reasons, to the request by September 16, 2021.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) will review information about the Project; any concerns expressed from the public and Indigenous groups; and expert advice from federal authorities and input from provincial ministries in order to inform the Minister on whether the Project should be designated. If designated, to proceed with the Project, the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency would be required to submit an Initial Project Description, thereby commencing the planning phase of IAA. In that case, the planning phase would include the Agency determining whether a federal impact assessment is required.

Additional information regarding the process for designation requests can be found at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/policy-guidance/designating-project-impact-assessment-act.html>.

Seeking Provincial Input

The Agency is requesting that you complete and provide the attached form by **July 20, 2021**. You may use the form to provide information with respect to the Project.

In the coming days, a Registry page for the Project will be available on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry Internet site. Please note that information received will be uploaded to this site.

Important Note: All records produced, collected or received in relation to the designation request process – unless prohibited under the *Access to Information Act* or *Privacy Act* – will be considered public and may be released on the Project's Registry page. Should you wish to provide any comments or documents that contain confidential or sensitive information that you believe should be protected from release to the public, please contact the Agency before submitting the information. Information marked as confidential will not be accepted without prior contact made with the Agency.

If you have any questions regarding the designation process or the response sheet, please do not hesitate to contact Greg Bosse at 587-334-2941 or greg.bosse@iaac-aeic.gc.ca.

Sincerely,

<original signed by>

Greg Bosse
Project Manager, Prairie & Northern Region

Attachment:

1) Provincial Advice Record: Designation Request under IAA

Enclosure:

- 1) Map of the Project – Water Security Agency
- 2) Letter requesting designation – Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nation