

The Environmental Assessment

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a decision-making process used to promote good environmental planning by assessing the potential effects of certain activities on the environment. In Ontario, this process is defined in the *Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act) and its regulations. The Act ensures environmental issues are considered, and their effects planned for, before development or building takes place. Under the Act, the definition of “environment” is not limited to the natural environment but includes social, cultural, and economic considerations.

Electricity Projects and the Environmental Assessment Act

Electricity projects in Ontario are subject to Ontario Regulation 116/01 under the *Environmental Assessment Act*. This regulation states that a transmission line that will transmit 115-kilovolt (kV) or more of electricity, and is greater than 2 km long is subject to the requirements of the Act. The East-West Tie Transmission Project (the Project) proposes construction of an approximately 446 km, 230-kV, double-circuit line and is therefore subject to an Individual EA.

Individual EA Process

An Individual EA requires that the proponent develop an EA Terms of Reference (ToR) and submit it to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) for approval. The second phase of the EA process is the EA Study which includes the EA Review and the Minister’s Decision.

According to the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*, “environment” means:

- Air, land or water;
- Plant and animal life, including human life;
- The social, economic and cultural conditions that influence the life of humans or a community;
- Any building, structure, machine or other device or thing made by humans;
- Any solid, liquid, gas, odour, heat, sound, vibration or radiation resulting directly or indirectly from human activities; or,
- Any part or combination of the foregoing and the interrelationships between any two or more of them in or of Ontario.

