

## 24. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

NextBridge intends to construct, own and maintain the East-West Tie Transmission Project. Engineering requirements, environmental considerations, input from consultation and engagement, and safety considerations have all been incorporated into the Project. An assessment of alternative route segments was carried out to identify the preferred route, which represents the preferred balance of advantages and disadvantages. The proposed construction and operation of the Project, which includes the preferred route and associated infrastructure, has undergone an Individual EA in accordance with the ToR and MOECC guidance, including the *Code of Practice: Preparing and Reviewing Environmental Assessments in Ontario* (MOECC 2014).

Proceeding with the Project will have environmental effects. Based on knowledge of the Project and the existing environment (Base Case) as described in this EA Report, and taking into account the implementation of the mitigation described in the EA Report and the EPP (Appendix 4-II), the incremental effects associated with the Project can be effectively mitigated by standard and specific environmental protection measures.

Net adverse effects associated with the Project, in combination with past, existing, certain/planned and reasonably foreseeable developments, have been determined to be significant for two wildlife and wildlife habitat criteria: woodland caribou and little brown myotis. Caribou in the caribou RSA are considered as not likely to be self-sustaining in the Base Case; therefore, combined effects from the Project and previous and existing developments are predicted to be significant despite the small incremental changes caused by the Project. White Nose Syndrome has resulted in dramatic declines of little brown myotis across the eastern portions of its range, including the little brown myotis RSA. The little brown myotis is predicted to be functionally extirpated (i.e., less than 1% of existing population remaining) in Canada and the United States within 16 years (COSEWIC 2012). After mitigation, the Project is anticipated to contribute no to little cumulative effects on little brown myotis; however, these populations are expected to continue to decline in the Project Case due to WNS and cumulative effects in the Project Case are predicted to be significant. Other net adverse environmental effects associated with the Project are predicted to be not significant.

The Project has been identified as a priority project by the Province of Ontario, and a needed Project by the IESO to meet future electricity demand in northwestern Ontario. Development of the Project has the potential to have a notable effect on the local economies of communities in northwestern Ontario and the province as a whole. Moreover, the Project is expected to provide an economic boost to northwestern Ontario, which is currently experiencing a downturn in the forestry sector and reductions in mining sector opportunities. Development of the Project is expected to result in economic benefits in the form of potential job creation, contracts, business opportunities and the purchase of goods and services.

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