

# ONTARIO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

## Why is this important to the study?

The planning for all major infrastructure projects in the Province of Ontario is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (OEAA) (R.S.O. 1990)* unless otherwise exempted.

## WHAT IS THE ONTARIO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ACT (OEAA)?

The Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (EAA) provides a planning and decision-making process to evaluate the potential environmental effects of a proposed undertaking (project).

## WHO DOES IT APPLY TO?

The EAA applies to all public activities. This includes projects originating from Ontario ministries and agencies, municipalities, public utilities, and Conservation Authorities. Projects subject to the Act are typically infrastructure developments, and include such things as public roads and highways, transit facilities, waste management facilities, electrical generation and transmission facilities, and flood protection works.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

The EAA ensures that the environment is fully characterized and considered as part of the project planning process. It achieves this by requiring proponents (i.e., the person, the corporation, or the government body proposing the project) to prepare an environmental assessment document that includes:

- A description of the project;
- A review of all reasonable alternatives for addressing the project;
- A description of the environment that could be affected by the various alternatives, and the extent of these effects;
- An evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives, based on the anticipated environmental effects; and
- The identification of the preferred alternative.

Throughout the EA study, the affected stakeholders must be given an opportunity to participate and to provide input on the proposed project. Typically, this includes the general public, adjacent property owners, municipal representatives, special interest groups, representatives of numerous federal and provincial government agencies, and affected First Nations.

## WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUAL EA PROJECT?

Large and complex projects with the potential for significant environmental impacts are subject to an Individual EA process. As a first step, the proponent must prepare terms of reference (ToR) – a plan for completing the EA process. Once the ToR is approved, the proponent's second step is to conduct the EA. When preparing both the proposed ToR and the EA, the public must be consulted.

## WHAT IS A CLASS EA PROJECT?

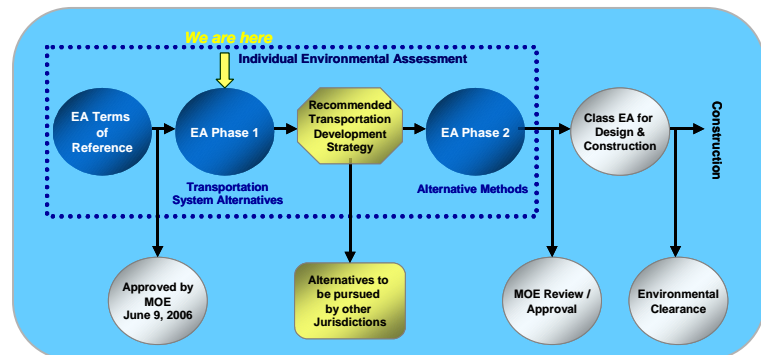
Projects that are carried out routinely and have predictable and mitigable environmental effects can follow a Class EA process. Under a specific class of undertakings (e.g., transit, municipal roads, and provincial transportation facilities) these projects are subject to a pre-approved EA process. If the prescribed planning process is followed, no further approval is required.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AS IT APPLIES TO NGTA

Transportation planning projects, like the NGTA Corridor, are subject to the Ontario EAA. Given the size and scale of the NGTA and the potential for a wide range of environmental effects, the Ministry of Transportation has chosen to follow the Individual EA process. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for this Individual EA was approved by the Minister of the Environment (MOE) on June 9, 2006.

The current corridor planning and EA study was initiated in December 2006, and is being undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 is examining a full range of options (rail, marine, transit and roadways) for increasing capacity in the Niagara to GTA corridor; it is expected to be completed in the fall/winter of 2009. Phase 2 will be initiated only if a new highway or transitway, or highway widening, is identified as one of the preferred solutions.

### EA Process for the NGTA Corridor Planning and EA Study



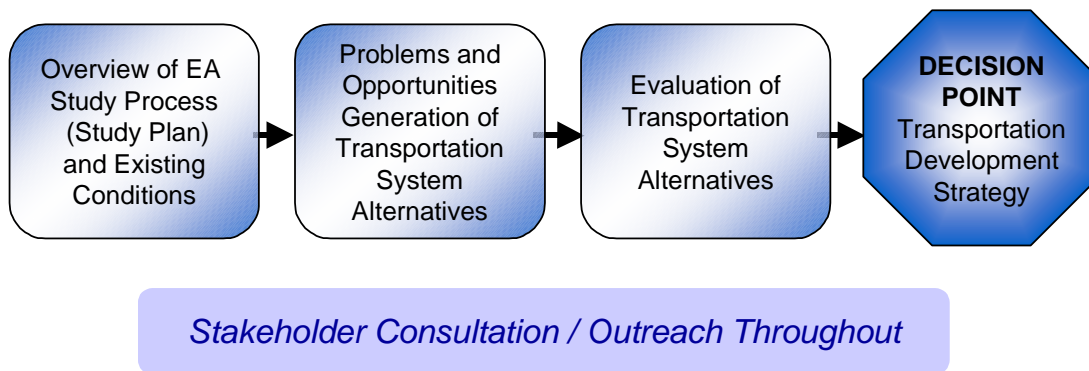
## STUDY PROCESS FOR THE NGTA CORRIDOR PLANNING AND EA STUDY

### PHASE 1

Phase 1 of this Environmental Assessment study includes the following key steps:

1. Development of a Study Plan (finalized in December 2007);
2. Examining transportation problems and opportunities (need for transportation improvements);
3. Identifying and assessing Area Transportation System Alternatives (i.e. alternatives to the undertaking);
4. Identifying preferred Area Transportation System Alternative(s) (Transportation Development Strategy); and,
5. Recommendations for future study in the Niagara to GTA corridor.

### NGTA Phase 1 Study Process



**Contact Information**  
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