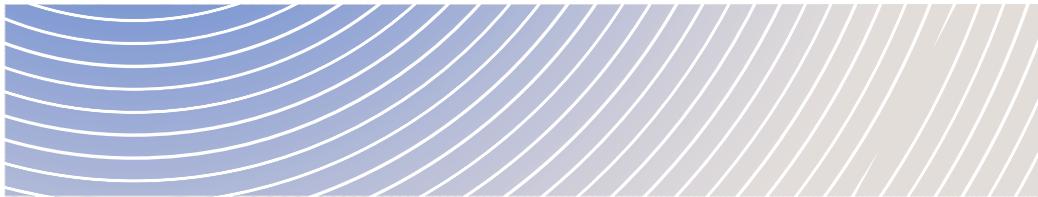


# Draft Public Participation Plan



IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE SUNCOR BASE MINE  
EXTENSION PROJECT

February 26, 2021

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT



Impact Assessment  
Agency of Canada

Agence d'évaluation  
d'impact du Canada

Canada



# Draft Public Participation Plan

## DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE SUNCOR BASE MINE EXTENSION PROJECT

February 26, 2021

---

### 1. Introduction

*This document is a draft version of the public participation plan for the impact assessment of the Suncor Base Mine Extension Project (the Project). During the comment period on this document, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) invites the public, Indigenous groups, the proponent, federal authorities and other participants to submit their comments on the draft public participation plan. To assist participants, the sections where comments are sought are in a contrasting colour. However, comments on the entire plan will also be accepted.*

Public participation is an essential part of an open, informed and meaningful impact assessment. The Government of Canada is committed to providing the public with the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the process and to provide the public with the information needed to participate in an informed way.

On August 7, 2020, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) determined that an impact assessment is required for the Suncor Base Mine Extension Project (the Project), pursuant to the *Impact Assessment Act* (the Act). On January 28, 2021, the Agency announced that the impact assessment of the Project was referred to an independent review panel.

The Act requires the development of a Public Participation Plan during the Planning Phase for all projects subject to an impact assessment. This Plan is developed by the Agency to set out opportunities for participation during the impact assessment process, and is designed to provide proponents and participants with certainty about how and when public participation will occur. It is also intended to be flexible and does not preclude the Agency or the Review Panel from making changes to the approaches described in this Plan in order to accommodate changes that may occur during the assessment.

For additional information about the implementation of meaningful public participation, please refer to the [Interim Policy Context for Public Participation in Impact Assessment](#) and [Guidance: Public Participation under the Impact Assessment Act](#).

A distinct and separate draft Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan is also available, outlining Indigenous engagement opportunities and approaches.



---

## 2. Description of the proposed project

Suncor Energy Inc. (the proponent) is proposing to develop the Project to sustain the supply of bitumen to the existing upgraders at the proponent's Oil Sands Base Plant operation (Base Plant). The Project includes an open pit mining operation and associated infrastructure that is required to supply oil sands to new bitumen froth production facilities and deliver bitumen froth by pipeline to the existing Base Plant facilities where further processing occurs, including upgrading into various product blends for market. The Project would be located adjacent to existing Base Plant operations, approximately three kilometres north of Fort McMurray, Alberta, within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. If approved, Project construction is expected to start in 2026 and the footprint is anticipated to be approximately 30,000 hectares.

For more information on the impact assessment of the Suncor Base Mine Extension Project or to view the information and comments received, visit the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (the Public Registry) at <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80521?culture=en-CA>.

---

## 3. Objectives of the Public Participation Plan

The following objectives for public participation are proposed. These objectives will be updated to reflect the views heard during the comment period held on the draft version of this Plan during the Planning Phase.

- Public participation is meaningful. This means that members of the public who want to take part in the impact assessment:
  - have the opportunity to do so,
  - have the information they need, and
  - have the capacity to participate in an informed manner.
- The public is engaged early and often, particularly at each key stage of the impact assessment process.
  - The public is involved in the development or revision of key documents, such as this plan, the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines, the Review Panel's Terms of Reference and Joint Review Panel Agreement (if applicable), the proponent's Impact Statement, the potential conditions, and potential changes to the Decision Statement.
- Participation opportunities are designed to take into account diverse needs and interests of the public. Opportunities include but are not limited to: public comment periods, the public hearing, and in-person or virtual information sessions or consultation events at key phases of the process.
- Public views heard throughout the process are tracked and inform decision making.

---

## 4. Distribution list and participants

Throughout the impact assessment process, the Agency and/or the Review Panel's secretariat will develop and maintain a distribution list of participants in the impact assessment. Individuals and organizations on the distribution list will receive updates and notices about the Project's impact assessment as the process unfolds.

---

*If you wish to be on the distribution list, please send an email to [IAAC.BaseMine-MineBase.AEIC@canada.ca](mailto:IAAC.BaseMine-MineBase.AEIC@canada.ca) with your full name and email address.*

*If you indicated that you would like to be added to the distribution list when you signed in to the online Public Registry or at an information session, you do not need to sign up again.*

---

The following is a list of participants that have indicated an interest to date in participating in the impact assessment of the Project:

- Residents of Fort McMurray and Fort MacKay, Alberta and surrounding area
- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Northern Alberta Chapter
- Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development
- General public

Please consult the draft Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan for a list of the Indigenous groups that are identified for engagement and partnership as part of the impact assessment of the Project.

The Agency has received comments from Indigenous groups pertaining to the participation of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (the Board) in the impact assessment of the Project, and is currently in discussion with the Board to determine how the Board will be best engaged in the impact assessment.

---

## 5. Public Participation Tools

In order to ensure meaningful public participation during the impact assessment process, the following communication and participation tools will be used:

- public notices posted on the Public Registry, published in newspapers and broadcast on the radio;



- emails to the distribution list;
- social media updates (e.g. the Agency's Twitter Feed);
- interactive community and information sessions (in-person or virtual presentations, with questions and answers);
- printed copies of key documents held in viewing centres, if requested;
- direct mailing;
- [training on the impact assessment process](#) and how to effectively participate, available by e-learning and on demand (on demand);
- public comment periods to gather participants' input on key documents;
- public hearing held by the Review Panel; and
- Other tools based on input from the public input during the comment period on this draft Public Participation Plan, as well as during the impact assessment process, or as determined by the Review Panel.

The Agency will ensure that documents posted to the Public Registry will allow the content to be read aloud by a screen reader so that they are accessible to visually impaired people. The Agency will also encourage the Proponent to adopt this practice.

Participation opportunities and associated tools are explained in more detail in Table 1 below.

- *The Agency is seeking your opinion on the communication tools listed above. Please tell us your preferences and your suggestions for other communication tools that could facilitate your participation.*
- *The Agency would also like to know if there are any challenges that could prevent you or your community or organization from accessing participation opportunities for this Project, including language barriers, economic or technical challenges, or other factors.*

---

## 6. Activities and public participation approaches

The following table provides a description of the main phases in the impact assessment process, and an outline of engagement opportunities in each phase, including events led by the Agency or the Review Panel. The table describes the objectives of each phase, the anticipated engagement activities, and applicable timelines.

The objectives of the Public Participation Plan will be considered for incorporation into the Review Panel's Terms of Reference. The Review Panel will select engagement activities that align with any rules or procedures it develops or adopts.

**Table 1. Public Participation Approaches and Activities**

Objectives of the Phase	Expected Activities	Public Participation Tools	Timelines
<b>Phase 1: Planning</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Support understanding of the proposed Project.</li><li>Increase public awareness of the impact assessment process and how to meaningfully participate.</li><li>Gather public input and views on the draft Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines and the Public Participation Plan, prior to finalizing these documents.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>From March 2 to May 1, 2020, the Agency <a href="#">invited comments</a> on the Initial Project Description. This period included a <a href="#">time limit suspension</a> to account for circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Comments were used to prepare the <a href="#">Summary of Issues</a>, which was provided to Suncor Energy Inc. on May 11, 2020.</li><li>From February 26 to April 7, 2021, the Agency is inviting comments on the draft Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines and the draft Public Participation Plan.</li><li>Virtual and interactive community meetings will be held to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>inform participants about the Project and the impact assessment process; and</li><li>provide the opportunity to comment on the draft Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines and draft Public Participation Plan.</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Notices on the Public Registry, newspapers and radio, and social media updates</li><li>Online comment periods</li><li>Response to inquiries via email or phone</li><li>Emails to the distribution list</li><li>Virtual community meetings</li><li>Calls and meetings with interested stakeholders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Planning Phase is a maximum of 180 days, excluding any timeline suspension.</li><li>This Phase commenced on March 2, 2020 with the acceptance of the <a href="#">Initial Project Description</a>.</li><li>This Phase will be completed with the posting of the Notice of Commencement of the impact assessment and related documents.</li></ul>



Objectives of the Phase	Expected Activities	Public Participation Tools	Timelines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Agency continues to respond to any inquiries received via the Public Registry, by email or phone.</li><li>• The Agency continues to administer participant funding to support participation in the impact assessment process.</li></ul>		
<b>Phase 2: Impact Statement</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase public awareness of the impact assessment process and how to meaningfully participate, especially in the Review Panel process and public hearing.</li><li>• Notify participants of key steps in the process such as the receipt of the Impact Statement, the appointment of the Review Panel and the comment period on the Impact Statement.</li><li>• Obtain the views of participants on whether the Impact Statement contains the required information and studies, as outlined in the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Agency will invite comments on the draft version of the Review Panel Terms of Reference and, if applicable, any agreement with Alberta pertaining to the establishment of a Joint Review Panel or coordination of assessment procedures.</li><li>• Upon receipt, the Impact Statement will be posted to the Public Registry and an email will be sent to the distribution list to notify participants.</li><li>• The Agency* will hold an online comment period on the Impact Statement. The comments will assist in determining whether the Impact Statement contains all the information and studies requested</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public notices announcing participation opportunities on the Public Registry, emails to the distribution list and updates on social media.</li><li>• Emails to the distribution list informing participants of key steps in the process and posting of documents relevant to the impact assessment and comments received</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Impact Statement Phase is a maximum of three years.</li><li>• This Phase commences upon posting of the Notice of Commencement of the impact assessment and related documents.</li><li>• This Phase is completed when the Agency is satisfied that the proponent submitted all the information and studies required in the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines.</li></ul>



Objectives of the Phase	Expected Activities	Public Participation Tools	Timelines
	<p>in the Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Agency* will hold information sessions to explain the review panel process, and to provide an opportunity to comment on the Impact Statement.</li></ul> <p>* If the Review Panel is appointed during the Impact Statement Phase, the Review Panel may lead public participation activities.</p>	<p>on the Public Registry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Public comment period on the Proponent's Impact Statement.</li><li>Virtual or in-person information sessions</li></ul>	
<b>Phase 3: Impact Assessment</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase public awareness of the impact assessment process by a Review Panel, and promote participation in the process.</li><li>Verify information in the Impact Statement and gather any additional information that the Review Panel needs to fulfill its Terms of Reference and write its report, including a summary of public comments.</li><li>Obtain comments from participants on the recommendations from the Agency regarding potential conditions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Review Panel may organize information sessions to explain activities and timelines related to the panel process.</li><li>The Review Panel will be mandated to hold public hearings and to endeavour to hold the public hearing sessions in the communities most likely to be affected by the proposed Project.</li><li>The Review Panel may hold additional public hearing sessions or provide additional participation opportunities, as required, to fulfil its Terms of Reference.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In-person or virtual information sessions</li><li>Public hearing sessions to discuss the Project's potential effects, mitigation measures and follow-up program<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Virtual hearings will be considered should in-person events be prohibited.</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The time limit for the Impact Assessment Phase is up to 600 days, unless the Agency determines additional time is required to cooperate with the AER.</li><li>The Agency will establish the time limits for this phase, including the time limit for the submission of the Review Panel Report and for the posting of the Agency's recommendations on</li></ul>



Objectives of the Phase	Expected Activities	Public Participation Tools	Timelines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following the close of the record, the Review Panel will prepare its report. The Review Panel's report will contain its rationale, conclusions and recommendations.</li><li>• The Agency will post a notice and email the distribution list to notify participants when the Review Panel's report has been submitted to the Minister and is posted on the Public Registry.</li><li>• Following the submission of the Review Panel report, the Agency will engage on potential conditions.</li><li>• The Agency will continue to administer funding to support participation in the impact assessment process.</li></ul>	<p>participation in hearings will be made available in either case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Written or oral submissions by participants during the public hearing</li><li>• All documents posted on the Public Registry</li><li>• Public notices of the participation opportunities, emails to the distribution list and updates on social media</li><li>• Agency-led comment period on the draft potential conditions</li><li>• Agency-led invitations for applications for funding</li></ul>	<p>potential conditions on the Registry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participation timelines, dates, locations and duration for the public hearing will be determined by the Review Panel and will be announced in a Notice of Public Hearing.</li><li>• This Phase ends when the Agency issues its recommendations on potential conditions.</li></ul>



Objectives of the Phase	Expected Activities	Public Participation Tools	Timelines
<b>Phase 4: Decision Making</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Inform the proponent and the public about the Decision Statement.</li><li>Increase public awareness of the reasons for the public interest determination made by the Governor in Council, the decision statement and the potential conditions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Posting of the Decision Statement by the Agency on the Public Registry, including the reasons for the public interest determination and potential conditions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Posting on the Public Registry of the Decision Statement</li><li>Public notices, email sent to the distribution list and updates on social media.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Decision-Making Phase is a maximum of 90 days, which starts following the posting of the Agency's recommendations on potential conditions.</li></ul>
<b>Phase 5 – Post Decision</b>			
<i>If the Project is approved</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Inform the public of follow-up and monitoring activities and results from follow-up program.</li><li>Inform participants of potential amendments to the Decision Statement.</li><li>Participants may take part in follow-up and monitoring activities, and inform the Agency of potential non-compliance.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Agency posts follow-up and monitoring documents to the Public Registry.</li><li>The proponent would need to obtain all other applicable regulatory approvals, including public participation opportunities led by other jurisdictions and federal authorities.</li><li>The Agency posts a notice inviting public comment on draft amendments to the Decision Statement. The decision included</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Public notices, email sent to the distribution list and updates on social media.</li><li>Comment period on potential amendments to the Decision Statement.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Decision Statement will expire if the proponent does not substantially begin to carry out the project within a certain period. This period must be established by the Minister considering views provided by the proponent.</li><li>Follow-up documents are posted according to the</li></ul>



Objectives of the Phase	Expected Activities	Public Participation Tools	Timelines
	<p>in the statement cannot be changed. The comments would inform whether the Decision Statement is amended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="692 502 1121 643">• The amended Decision Statement and reasons for amending would be posted on the Public Registry.</li></ul>		schedule identified in the Decision Statement.



---

## 7. Participant funding

Funding to support public participation is available. For information about the activities that are eligible for funding or to apply for funding please see the National Program Guidelines and application forms on the following page <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/public-participation/participant-funding-application-environmental-assessment.html>.

Please note that while the opportunity to apply for public funding for the Planning Phase has closed, funding opportunities for subsequent phases will be advertised as they become available.

---

## 8. Contact information

Until the Review Panel closes the record, comments may be submitted at any time during the process by using the “Submit a comment” feature on the Project’s page on the Public Registry (reference number 80521, at <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80521?culture=en-CA>). Attachments can be uploaded using this feature.

If you have any difficulties with the submission process, please contact the Agency or the Review Panel's secretariat (following the establishment of the Review Panel), using the contact information below. Comments may also be submitted by email to [IAAC.BaseMine-MineBase.AEIC@canada.ca](mailto:IAAC.BaseMine-MineBase.AEIC@canada.ca) or by regular mail.

Comments and other documents received by the Agency or Review Panel will form part of the Project record and will be posted on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry website. The [Agency's Submission Policy](#) determines what information can be shared publicly and what information should remain private. For more information on how we protect your privacy, please refer to the [Agency's Privacy Notice](#). If you do not want your comment to be posted on the Public Registry, please contact the Agency before submitting your comment.

If you have questions or need information, please contact:

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada – Suncor Base Mine Extension Project  
160 Elgin Street, 22nd Floor, Ottawa ON K1A 0H3  
Tel.: 343-549-5813  
Email: [IAAC.BaseMine-MineBase.AEIC@canada.ca](mailto:IAAC.BaseMine-MineBase.AEIC@canada.ca)