



**ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS
PRESS RELEASE/COMMUNiqué
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**Proposed Changes to Environmental Assessments Welcomed, Continued
Engagement with First Nations Required**

(Ottawa, ON) – Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde today welcomed proposed new legislation on environmental assessments, stating that with full and effective engagement with First Nations the AFN will seek every opportunity to further improve it prior to its implementation.

“Several of the priorities expressed and the input shared by First Nations is reflected in the proposed legislation announced by the federal government today,” said AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde. “In particular we welcome the positive steps taken to include the recognition of rights, early and ongoing engagement with First Nations, and the mandatory requirement to consider Indigenous traditional knowledge as part of the environmental review process, as well as respect for cultural impacts. There is always room for improvement and with the full engagement of First Nations, we will seek every opportunity to further improve this proposed legislation, including ensuring its consistency with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

Federal environment Minister Catherine McKenna announced the plans to overhaul the environmental assessment process at a press conference in Ottawa this morning. It is part of a federal review involving four pieces of legislation, including the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA), the National Energy Board (NEB), the Fisheries Act (FA) and the Navigation Protection Plan (NPA).

“As part of our commitment toward collaboration and advocacy, AFN will continue to enable direct First Nation involvement in shaping legislative amendments and the co-development of policies and regulations,” said AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek.

Proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act were announced separately Tuesday by Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard Dominic LeBlanc. Changes include restoring lost protections in the 2012-13 omnibus bills, protecting all fish, fish habitat, bio-diversity and the inclusion of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge to inform decisions that impact fish and fish habitat under the Act.

Chiefs from across Canada will gather May 1-2 in Gatineau for an AFN Special Chiefs Assembly for a dialogue and review of federal legislation.

*The AFN is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.
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