

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
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February 3, 2026

RE: ERO 19-7891 New regulation to focus municipal environmental assessment requirements

The City of Ottawa has reviewed the proposal to modernize the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Process as described in [ERO 19-7891](#). We are pleased to see a continued commitment to maintaining environmental safeguards while reducing delays on municipal infrastructure projects. The City's recently approved Transportation Master Plan calls for over \$1.5 billion of investment in priority road projects to support growth and development; most of these projects will require new or updated Environmental Assessments to move forward under the current process.

In managing the entire end-to-end process of a municipal infrastructure project, from EA to final construction, the City of Ottawa sees the impact the front end of the process has on timelines to construction, and therefore we support and value the proposal to help reduce the EA requirements for transportation projects. The proposed amendments will allow municipalities to tailor the planning process to the local context and meet project needs.

The City of Ottawa has some concerns and seeks clarification on aspects of the proposed Archaeological Assessment process and the rules for transition to a new streamlined EA process, as outlined below.

Archeological Assessment Process (AAP)

The proposal introduces a new archaeological assessment process for certain listed projects (including specific road and road-related infrastructure projects) that would otherwise have no requirements under the Environmental Assessment Act.

The City is concerned that this new process may have unintended schedule impacts on project delivery and offers the following comments for consideration:

- Requiring notification and review after Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment shifts part of the approval process into the project's design phase, where seasonal constraints and land access challenges could potentially create schedule delays. Requiring notice and

reporting after the Stage 1 Assessment only, as occurs today, would maintain the efficiency and predictability of the current process.

- Clarification is needed on the difference between “notice” and “consultation”. The streamlined EA process requires consultation, while the Archaeological Assessment process requires only notice. Our understanding is that notice allows projects to proceed if no response is received within the review period. We support this approach for Archaeological Assessments to maintain project timelines, and agree that more fulsome consultation is required for projects subject to a streamlined EA.
- The minimum 30-day review period may extend considerably in practice, creating schedule uncertainty where there is no guidance on managing late or absent responses.

Municipal Projects

Table 1 lists municipal projects that would be subject to the new Archaeological Assessment process. Our key concerns are as follows:

- In calculating the number of lane-kilometers, it is unclear how auxiliary turn lanes and transit/cycling lanes should be treated. We also question how the number of lanes relates to archaeological potential and would suggest simplifying this criterion to the total project length.
- Project descriptions inconsistently refer to projects outside the “previously disturbed portion of an existing right-of-way” versus projects requiring property. We support archaeological assessments where the majority of the project footprint is outside the right-of-way, but they should not be required for projects fully within an existing right-of-way or involving only minor, localized strips of additional property (for example, at an intersection).
- It is unclear whether “other linear paved road facilities” includes driveways or accesses; these should not be subject to the assessment process.

Duplication in Private Applications

We are also concerned about the impact on private-sector development. Developers routinely construct collector roads, local roads, and pathways as part of new subdivisions, and imposing new archaeological assessment requirements under the Environmental Assessment Act—

beyond those already triggered under the Planning Act—risks duplicating efforts and could add time and cost to development.

Transition Provisions

While we support many of the transition provisions, we do not support the requirement for an EA addendum for projects with an “expired” EA that would not otherwise fall under the streamlined EA process. For older, unfunded projects, this requirement could introduce administrative complexity without advancing environmental outcomes. To support efficient implementation, we suggest that changes to such projects be considered “not significant”, avoiding further notification and review requirements.

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed changes to the EA process and hope that our comments are considered as the MECP moves forward with finalizing the regulation.

Sincerely,

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