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# A Proponent's Guide to **Environmental Assessment**

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**Environment**

Policy Division  
Environmental Assessment Branch

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose of this Guide**

The Environmental Assessment Branch (EA Branch) has prepared this guide as a reference for proponents prior to registration for environmental assessment (EA). The purpose of this guide is to explain in a clear and concise manner how EA in Nova Scotia is carried out.

This guide is not a substitute for the *Environment Act* or regulations (Appendix A). Proponents planning an undertaking in Nova Scotia should obtain copies of the Act and regulations and contact the EA Branch before beginning an EA. Where the process and time frames given in this document differ from the regulations, the regulations shall prevail.

Updated versions of this guide will be available on the EA Branch website at: <https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/ea/>

### **1.2 Background**

Formal EA originated in Nova Scotia on July 14, 1989 when the *Environmental Assessment Act* and regulations were created. Prior to this date, environmental regulation was carried out through licenses under the *Environmental Protection Act*.

On January 1, 1995 the *Environmental Assessment Act* was consolidated with 15 other Acts to create what is now known as the *Environment Act*. EA is found in Part IV of the *Environment Act* and is set out in the *Environmental Assessment Regulations* and the *Environmental Assessment Review Panel Regulations*.

### **1.3 What is Environmental Assessment?**

EA is a tool through which the environmental effects of a proposed undertaking are predicted and evaluated, and a subsequent decision is made on the acceptability of the undertaking.

The purpose of EA is to promote sustainable development by protecting and conserving the environment. EA promotes better project planning by identifying and assessing possible adverse effects on the environment before a new undertaking begins. This is accomplished by involving government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), First Nations, and the general public throughout the review of a proposed development. In addition, in certain circumstances, special consultations may be held with First Nations.

By identifying and addressing environmental effects at the earliest stages of project development, EA may help proponents save time and money.

#### 1.4 What Environmental Assessment is not?

When discussing EA, it is important not to confuse it with another common practice called environmental site assessment. Where EA is used to determine if there will be any adverse environmental impacts before a project begins, an environmental site assessment determines whether a particular property may be contaminated as a result of previous land uses. This type of assessment is usually requested by lending agencies (banks, etc.), sellers, and buyers of property to assess the environmental liability associated with a property.

It should also be noted that the federal government has an EA process that differs from Nova Scotia's. The two have similar aims but each has different activities which trigger an EA.

#### 1.5 What is an Undertaking?

An undertaking can be described as a proposed development which may cause significant environmental effects. A list of these undertakings is included in Schedule "A" of the *Environmental Assessment Regulations* (Table 3-1).

EA of these undertakings, as described in this document, is used to promote good project planning and therefore minimize impacts that developments cause to the environment. Please refer to the glossary for the complete definition of undertaking.

**When can I begin work on an undertaking?**

Work can begin on an undertaking only when the Minister grants environmental assessment approval, and the proponent obtains all other necessary approvals, permits or authorizations required by municipal, provincial and federal acts, regulations, by-laws, guidelines, policies or standards.

## **1.6 Benefits of Environmental Assessment**

EA has many benefits, including:

- promotes sustainable development by protecting and conserving the environment. EA helps balance environmental protection with economic development.
- promotes better project planning by identifying and addressing environmental effects at the earliest stages of project development, which can save proponents of projects time and money and result in an improved project. Staff of the EA Branch work with industry from the early stages of project development
- helps build trust and confidence in developments because it is an established process with formal opportunities for public involvement in the decision making.
- helps educate proponents on how their developments affect the environment so that better projects are developed now and in the future

## **1.7 For More Information**

If you would like further information, please visit the EA Branch website at <https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/ea/>, or contact the EA Branch by phone at (902) 424-3600, by fax at (902) 424-6925, by email at [EA@novascotia.ca](mailto:EA@novascotia.ca), or by mail at the following address:

Environmental Assessment Branch  
Nova Scotia Environment  
PO Box 442  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 2P8

## **2. ADMINISTRATION**

### **2.1 Environmental Assessment Branch**

The EA Branch promotes good project planning and sustainable development through the coordination and administration of EA in Nova Scotia as set out in the *Environmental Assessment Regulations*.

The EA Branch continually interacts with industry, various interest groups, First Nations, government departments and the general public to ensure that EA is open, transparent, accountable and effective. The EA Branch also works to harmonize EA in Nova Scotia with other jurisdictions when necessary.

At the initial stages of project development, the EA Branch works with proponents in identifying and addressing environmental concerns. After considering all of the information compiled through a public review, the EA Branch makes recommendations to the Minister regarding the proposed project. For those developments that are granted EA approval, the EA Branch develops and carries out a follow-up procedure with the proponent.

## 2.2 Government Review

A number of government departments and agencies are contacted on a project by project basis when a project is registered for EA. These departments and agencies review the EA information and provide the EA Branch with comments. The government departments and agencies contacted will depend upon the project issues and location, and may include the following:

### Provincial Government Departments and Agencies:

- Department of Environment
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
- Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations
- Department of Health
- Department of Energy
- Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board
- Nova Scotia Museum

### Federal Government Departments:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Transport Canada

Local Municipal Office

#### **Who else can review environmental assessment information?**

Any member of the general public, various interest groups and First Nations can review environmental assessment information and submit comments.

#### **Are the comments submitted during the environmental assessment publicly available?**

Yes. All comments received during an environmental assessment will be kept on file with the EA Branch.

## 2.3 Disclosure and Confidentiality

All information submitted by the proponent for EA is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Under this act, a proponent can request that any personal and confidential business information be kept confidential. It is the proponent's responsibility to make a claim to the Administrator stating why the information should be withheld from the public. Information accepted to be confidential will not be disclosed to the public. However, when confidentiality is denied by the Administrator, the proponent can either allow the information to be disclosed or the proponent can withdraw the registered undertaking.

## **2.4 Federal Environmental Assessment**

An undertaking required to complete a provincial EA may also require a federal EA. Federal EA is legislated under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (Appendix A). The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (the "Agency") plays a role in administering the act. The Agency is independent from all other federal departments and reports directly to the federal Minister of Environment.

The proponent should contact the Agency (Appendix B) early in the planning stages of the undertaking to determine if a federal EA is required.

## **2.5 Environmental Assessment Harmonization**

In some cases an undertaking may require both a provincial and federal EA. In these cases the EA Branch will coordinate or harmonize its review with the federal government, where possible and practical. Formal harmonization has been agreed to with the signing of the *Canada-Wide Accord on Environmental Harmonization* and the sub-agreement on EA between the Government of Canada, the Territories and Provinces, excluding Quebec. The aim of these agreements is to achieve 'one project - one assessment', to enhance environmental protection, promote sustainable development and achieve greater effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, predictability and clarity of environmental management for issues of Canada-wide interest.

The legislative process for a harmonized EA can vary from the information explained in this guide in order to ensure that the requirements of all parties are fulfilled. The proponent will be notified of the changes prior to registration.

Even where formal harmonization is not possible, the EA Branch works to coordinate elements of the EA, including document preparation and logistics.

### 3. PRE-REGISTRATION

#### 3.1 Developments that Require Environmental Assessment

Developments required to undergo an EA are listed in the *Environmental Assessment Regulations* (Table 3-1). These developments are called undertakings and are divided into two classes, Class 1 and Class 2.

Class 1 undertakings are usually smaller in scale and may or may not cause significant environmental impacts or be of sufficient concern to the public. A public review of a proponent's initial submission, called a registration document, is required, after which the Minister will decide if a more detailed review and/or public hearing is required. Examples of these types of developments include mines, certain highways and waste dangerous goods handling facilities.

Class 2 undertakings are typically larger in scale and are considered to have the potential to cause significant environmental impacts and concern to the public. These undertakings require an EA report and formal public review which may include public hearings. Examples of these types of developments include solid waste incinerators, petrochemical facilities and pulp plants.

The Minister has the authority to apply an EA to a policy, plan or program, or a modification, extension, abandonment, demolition or rehabilitation to those undertakings listed in Table 3-1, as Class 1 or Class 2.

**Do I have to register my existing facility or operation?**

Registration under Part IV of the *Environment Act* is not required of existing facilities and operations if they were registered under the 1989 *Environmental Assessment Act* and regulations.

Any modification, extension, abandonment, demolition or rehabilitation of an existing undertaking listed in Schedule "A" of the *Environmental Assessment Regulations* which was established either before or after March 17, 1995 may require registration for environmental assessment. The Act and regulations do not apply to routine maintenance or repair of existing facilities or operations.

**Table 3-1: Schedule "A"**

Category	Class 1
A. Industrial Facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A storage facility with a total capacity of over 5000 m<sup>3</sup> intended to hold liquid or gaseous substances, such as hydrocarbons or chemicals other than water.</li> <li>2. A facility for the manufacture of wood products that are pressure treated with chemical products.</li> <li>3. A facility that produces fish meal.</li> <li>4. A rendering plant.</li> <li>5. An onshore pipeline 5 km or longer, other than a pipeline that carries any of the following:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. natural gas, if the pipeline has a maximum operating pressure below 3450 kPa (500 psig);</li> <li>b. water;</li> <li>c. steam</li> <li>d. domestic wastewater.</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. A natural gas processing plant.</li> <li>7. A paper product manufacturing plant</li> <li>8. An oil refinery that:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. produces no more than 15,000 L of hydrocarbon products per day;</li> <li>b. uses feedstock that meets all of the following criteria:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) it contains no more than 1% sulphur compounds by weight;</li> <li>(ii) it does not contain halogenated compounds.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>
B. Mining	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A facility that extracts or processes any of the following:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. metallic or non-metallic minerals;</li> <li>b. coal;</li> <li>c. peat;</li> <li>d. peat moss;</li> <li>e. gypsum;</li> <li>f. limestone;</li> <li>g. bituminous shale;</li> <li>h. oil shale.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. A pit or quarry, other than a pit or quarry exempted under Section 4 of the regulations for the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, that is larger than 4 ha in area for extracting on the following:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ordinary stone;</li> <li>b. building or construction stone;</li> <li>c. sand;</li> <li>d. gravel;</li> <li>e. ordinary soil.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
C. Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The construction of a new paved highway that is longer than 2 km and is designed for 4 or more lanes of traffic.</li> <li>2. The construction of a new paved highway that is longer than 10 km and is designed for 2 or more lanes of traffic.</li> </ol>

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Category	Class 1
D. Energy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A corridor for 1 or more electric power transmission lines that have a cumulative voltage rating equal to or greater than 345 kVA.</li> <li>2. An energy generating facility, other than an emergency generator, that meets any one of the following:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. it has a production rating of at least 2 MW derived from wind, tides or waves,</li> <li>b. it has a production rating of at least 2 MW and no more than 25 MW derived from hydroelectricity, other than run-of-the-river facilities under 10 MW,</li> <li>c. it has a daily fuel input rating of at least 11 000 GJ and no more than 31 000 GJ derived from natural gas,</li> <li>d. it has a daily fuel input rating of at least 250 GJ, and no more than 2500 GJ derived from fossil fuels other than natural gas,</li> <li>e. it has a daily fuel input rating of at least 4000 GJ and no more than 10 000 GJ derived from fuels other than fossil fuels, but excluding solar power.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
E. Waste Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A facility for storing, processing, treating or disposing of waste dangerous goods that were not produced at that facility Except all of the following facilities:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a facility operated by, or on behalf of, a municipality or Provincial agency for waste dangerous goods collected only from residential premises,</li> <li>b. a facility in which asbestos waste is stored, if waste dangerous goods are not otherwise processed, treated or disposed of at that facility,</li> <li>c. a facility in which lead acid battery waste is stored, if waste dangerous goods are not otherwise processed, treated or disposed of at that facility</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. A facility for treating, processing or disposing of contaminated materials that is located at a site other than where the contaminated materials originated.</li> <li>3. A thermal treatment facility as defined in the <i>Solid Waste-Resource Management Regulations</i> made under the Act.</li> </ol>
F. Other	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An undertaking that involves transferring water between drainage basins, if the drainage area containing the water to be diverted is larger than 1 km<sup>2</sup>.</li> <li>2. An undertaking that disrupts a total of 2 ha or more of any wetland.</li> </ol>

Category	Class 2
A. Industrial Facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A facility for manufacturing, processing or reprocessing radioactive materials.</li> <li>2. A heavy water plant.</li> <li>3. A pulp mill.</li> <li>4. A petrochemical manufacturing plant.</li> <li>5. A cement plant.</li> <li>6. An oil refinery other than an oil refinery listed as a Class 1 undertaking.</li> <li>7. A non-ferrous or ferrous metal smelter.</li> <li>8. A lead acid battery plant.</li> <li>9. A ferro-alloy plant.</li> </ol>
B. Energy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An energy generating facility, other than an emergency generator, that meets any one of the following:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) it has a production rating of more than 25 MW derived from hydroelectricity;</li> <li>(b) it has a daily fuel input rating of more than 31,000 GJ derived from natural gas;</li> <li>(c) it has a daily fuel input rating of more than 2,500 GJ derived from fossil fuels other than natural gas;</li> <li>(d) it has a daily fuel input rating of more than 10,000 GJ from fuels other than fossil fuels, but excluding solar power.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. A water reservoir that has a storage capacity of 10 000 000 m<sup>3</sup> or more than the mean volume of the natural water body source for which it is a reservoir.</li> </ol>
C. Waste Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An incinerator as defined in the <i>Solid Waste-Resource Management Regulations</i> made under the Act.</li> </ol>

### 3.2 Undertakings Exempt from Environmental Assessment

Registration is not required for the following:

- Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR) pits and quarries used solely to provide fill or aggregate for road building and maintenance contracts with TIR;
- routine maintenance or repair of existing facilities;
- policies, plans or programs developed after March 17, 1995, which will not directly or indirectly cause an adverse effect or significant environmental effect; or
- an undertaking that was registered before the *Environmental Assessment Act* (1989) and regulations became law.

### 3.3 'One Window' Process

The 'One Window' process was developed by the Nova Scotia Government to streamline the review process for government and proponents of mining and marine renewable energy developments. The process allows the proponent to meet with relevant government departments during the project planning stage to discuss the undertaking and what the departments require from the proponent, including other approvals.

Proponents planning these types of developments should contact the respective Chairperson of the 'One Window' Standing Committee (Appendix B).

Proponents planning a mining development should also refer to *Guide to Preparing an EA Registration Document for Mining Developments in Nova Scotia* on our website.

### 3.4 Public Involvement

The Minister considers concerns expressed by the public about the adverse effects or the environmental effects of the proposed undertaking, and the steps taken by the proponent to address those concerns when making a decision. Proponents can choose to involve the public early in the project planning stage to inform them about the development. By doing so, the public can make their concerns known to the proponent who can then address them through planning decisions.

**Can I review previous environmental assessments?**

Yes. Previous environmental assessments can be reviewed upon request (Appendix B).

Environmental assessments registered since 2000 can also be viewed at the EA branch website at: [www.gov.ns.ca/nse.ea](http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse.ea).

It is up to the proponent to decide to involve the public and how they will be involved. Methods used in the past include organizing open house events, distributing newsletters, conducting door-to-door surveys, advertising in newspapers and establishing 1-800 numbers. The method used should suit the type of project and particular community in which it is being conducted.

When deciding who to contact and involve, the proponent should consider identifying and contacting the local community residents and leaders; various local interest groups; First Nation representatives; government representatives (municipal, provincial and federal); and other stakeholders who may have an interest in the proposed project.

It is important for the proponent to document contact with the public, including what issues were raised and how they were addressed. This information must be included in the registration document.

## 4. REGISTRATION

### 4.1 Preparing the Registration Document for a Class 1 Undertaking

When preparing a registration document for a Class 1 undertaking, the proponent must ensure that certain information is included in the document. The undertaking will not be officially registered until the proponent submits all the required information. Under Section 9 (1A) of the *Environmental Assessment Regulations*, a registration document must include the following information:

- the name of the undertaking;
- the location of the undertaking;
- the name, address, signature, and identification of the proponent including the name of the Chief Executive Officer and contact persons;
- the nature of the undertaking;
- the purpose and need of the undertaking;
- the proposed construction and operation schedules;
- a description of the undertaking;
- environmental baseline information
- all steps taken or proposed by the proponent to identify and address the concerns of the public and aboriginal people
- a list of all concerns regarding the undertaking expressed by the public and aboriginal people
- a list of approvals which will be required and other forms of authorization; and the sources of any public funding.

For a Class 1 undertaking, the information included in the registration document will need to be sufficient for the Minister to make a decision on the undertaking. Under Section 12 of the *Environmental Assessment Regulations*, the Minister must consider the following information when making a decision:

- the location of the proposed undertaking and the nature and sensitivity of the surrounding area;
- the size, scope and complexity of the proposed undertaking;
- concerns expressed by the public and aboriginal people about the adverse effects or the environmental effects of the proposed undertaking;
- steps taken by the proponent to address environmental concerns expressed by the public and aboriginal people;
- whether environmental baseline information submitted under subclause 9(1A)(b)(x) for the undertaking is sufficient for predicting adverse effects or environmental effects related to the undertaking;

- potential and known adverse effects or environmental effects of the proposed undertaking, including identifying any effects on species at risk, species of conservation concern and their habitats;
- project schedules where applicable;
- planned or existing land use in the area of the undertaking;
- other undertakings in the area;
- whether compliance with licenses, certificates, permits, approvals or other documents of authorization required by law will mitigate the environmental effects;
- such other information as the Minister may require.

It is at the discretion of the proponent to provide additional information beyond the minimum requirements specified in Section 9 (1A) of the regulations. The proponent should contact the EA Branch or visit the EA Branch website for more information and to see if a “sector-specific” guide exists for your undertaking.

**Are there any fees to register a development for environmental assessment?**

Yes, as of April 2002 fees are applied to all undertakings required to register for environmental assessment. Please contact the EA Branch or visit our website for the fee schedule.

The proponent should identify the current conditions of the existing environment and distinguish those aspects that have value to all stakeholders. These environmental features are commonly called the Valued Environmental Components (VECs). The proponent should also include the predicted environmental effects and adverse effects that may be influenced by the undertaking and the proposed measures that will be used to mitigate and monitor those effects.

When addressing the environmental effects in the document, the proponent should consider any positive and negative environmental effects that the undertaking may cause and any change to the undertaking that may be caused by the environment. This includes those changes which occur inside or outside Nova Scotia.

Information should be provided on the effects of the proposed project on groundwater, surface water, flora, fauna, aquatic habitat and any other aspect of the environment. It is also important the proponent incorporates climate change considerations in the registration document. In general, all proponents should assess their carbon footprint, review possible options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and assess any impacts the project may have on carbon sinks. Similarly, the proponent should also, identify whether or not there are potential hazards from climate change that could affect the project. Also the document should include any effects on environmental health, such as any contaminants that may affect human health that will be released into the atmosphere, water or land.

A discussion of the effects to the socio-economic conditions of the area should be detailed in the document. Examples of these could include employment, transportation, recreation and tourism.

Information on the effects to the physical and cultural heritage of the project area should be a component of the registration. This could include any structure, site or thing that may have historical, archaeological, paleontological or architectural significance.

**Can I withdraw my registration at anytime?**

Yes. A registration can be withdrawn at anytime prior to the Minister's Decision.

Addressing adverse effects will entail evaluating any effects that impairs or damages the environment, including an adverse effect respecting the health of humans or the reasonable enjoyment of life or property.

The registration document should describe all measures that will be used to avoid or mitigate any negative effects and maximize any positive effects of an undertaking. Mitigation includes the elimination, reduction or control of the adverse effects or the significant environmental effects of an undertaking. Mitigation may include restitution for any damage to the environment caused by such effects through replacement, restoration, compensation or any other means.

All proposed compliance monitoring programs that will be used throughout the life of the undertaking should be incorporated into the registration document. Monitoring programs should be designed to determine the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures.

The proponent should also discuss plans for the remediation of the affected environment during the closure or decommissioning phase of the undertaking.

## **4.2 Preparing the Registration Document for a Class 2 Undertaking**

When preparing a registration document for a Class 2 undertaking, the proponent must ensure that the information listed under Section 9 (1A) of the *Environmental Assessment Regulations* is included in the document. Please refer to Section 4.1 of this guide for the list of required information. The undertaking will not be officially registered until the proponent submits all the required information.

The registration document does not have to be limited to the information required under Section 9 (1A). The registration document will be used by the public, various interest groups, First Nations and government departments when commenting on the proposed terms of reference. It is the proponent's decision whether to provide additional information in the registration document beyond the minimum requirements.

**When is an environmental assessment referred to the Environmental Assessment Review Panel?**

An environmental assessment will be referred to the Environmental Assessment Review Panel for all Class 2 undertakings. Class 1 undertakings that require an EA report may be referred to the Review Panel only if the Minister decides it is required.

**What happens if I miss the time frames set out in the regulations?**

Unless an extension is granted by the Minister or the Administrator, failure to meet the time frames of the regulations renders the registered development null.

## 5. CLASS 1 UNDERTAKINGS

### 5.1 Registration

Registration of a Class 1 undertaking occurs one week after the proponent submits the required number of hard copies (approximately 5 depending on the project type) of the registration document to the EA Branch (Figure 5-1). An acceptable electronic copy of the document will also be required to be published on the EA Branch website (check with the EA Branch for requirements).

Copies of the document will be distributed to the government reviewers, some interest groups and First Nations for comments. Public access to the document will also be provided.

The proponent must establish two public viewing locations within the vicinity of the undertaking and provide the EA Branch with the contact names, and mailing and street addresses for these locations. Typical public viewing locations include a local town office, library, corner store or other public locations. Each of the public viewing locations must be supplied with a hard copy of the registration document by the proponent.

The proponent must publish an advertisement notifying the public of the registration and inviting the public to submit written comments to the EA Branch. The notice must be published in two newspapers, one with circulation in the vicinity of the undertaking and one with province-wide circulation. If there is no newspaper in the vicinity of the undertaking, the advertisement must be posted in a municipal building, post office or other public building in the area. An electronic copy of the notice will be required to be published on the EA Branch website (check with the EA Branch for requirements).

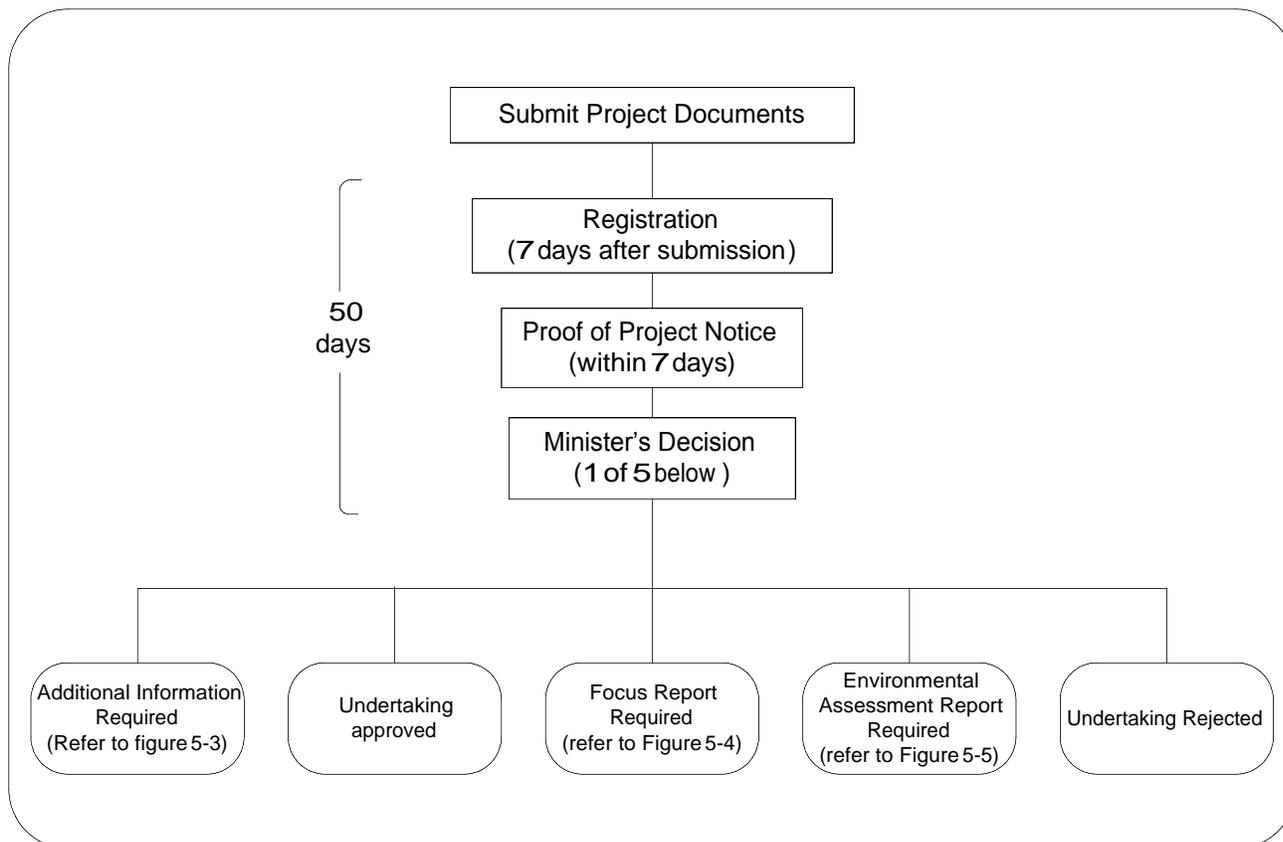
**How long does it typically take to complete an environmental assessment for a Class 1 undertaking?**

This type of environmental assessment typically takes 50 calendar days of process time to complete. However, that time may be extended if the Minister decides that more information, a focus report or an EA report is required from the proponent.

The amount of time it takes a proponent to prepare the registration document will depend on the complexity of the undertaking and the amount of information the proponent has already available.

**How long is the public review period for the registration document of a Class 1 undertaking?**

The public review period for the registration document lasts 30 calendar days.



**Figure 5-1: Steps Required During an Environmental Assessment - Class 1**

The proponent must provide the EA Branch with the complete newspaper page showing the notice, date and name of the newspaper. Figure 5-2 is an example of the content and size requirements for the public notice. At a minimum, the notice must include the following:

- the name and address of the proponent;
- the proposed location of the proposed undertaking;
- the nature of the proposed undertaking;
- the date of registration pursuant to the Act and regulations;
- the proposed commencement date and project schedule where applicable; and
- the locations where registration information may be viewed by the public.

It is important that the information provided by the proponent in the notice, is consistent with the proposed undertaking. The notice must provide a clear description of the project.

All comments received during the review period are available for public review in the Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) Library.

Following the review period, the EA Branch will carefully consider all the information submitted during the review. The EA Branch will then provide the Minister with a report summarizing the issues and comments and make a recommendation for the Minister's consideration.

**What happens if a conflict occurs during an environmental assessment?**

At any stage of the environmental assessment, an undertaking may be referred to an alternate dispute resolution (ADR) procedure where the Minister believed an ADR technique is appropriate for the resolution of a dispute or an issue. The Minister may adjust the time limits in the regulations to accommodate the ADR.

## NOTICE

### Registration of Undertaking for Environmental Assessment ENVIRONMENT ACT

This is to advise that on **(DATE of REGISTRATION)**, **(COMPANY)** registered a **(PROJECT NAME)** for environmental assessment, in accordance with Part IV of the *Environment Act*.

The purpose of the proposed undertaking is to **(BRIEF 2 - 3 SENTENCE DESCRIPTION, INCLUDING PROPOSED UNDERTAKING, LOCATION, PROPOSED COMMENCEMENT DATE AND PROJECT SCHEDULE WHERE APPLICABLE. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE PROPONENT IN THE NOTICE, IS CONSISTENT WITH THE PROPOSED UNDERTAKING)**.

Copies of the environmental assessment registration information may be examined at the following locations:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Public viewing location provided by the Proponent (e.g. local town office)**
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Public viewing location provided by the Proponent (e.g. local library, corner store or other public location)**
- Nova Scotia Environment, **Regional Office**
- EA website (when available) <https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/ea/>

The public is invited to submit written comments to:

Environmental Assessment Branch  
Nova Scotia Environment  
P.O. Box 442, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2P8

on or before **(deadline date for public comments provided by NSE)** or contact the Department at (902) 424-3600, (902) 424-6925 (Fax), or e-mail at [EA@novascotia.ca](mailto:EA@novascotia.ca).

All submissions received, including personal information, will be made available for public review upon request.

Published by: **(COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS)**

**Figure 5- 2: Sample of a Public Notice**

## 5.2 The Minister's Decision

The Minister must provide the proponent with a decision in writing. The Minister has the following decision options: a) additional information required; b) undertaking is approved; c) undertaking is rejected; d) focus report required; or e) EA report required.

**Can I appeal an environmental assessment decision?**

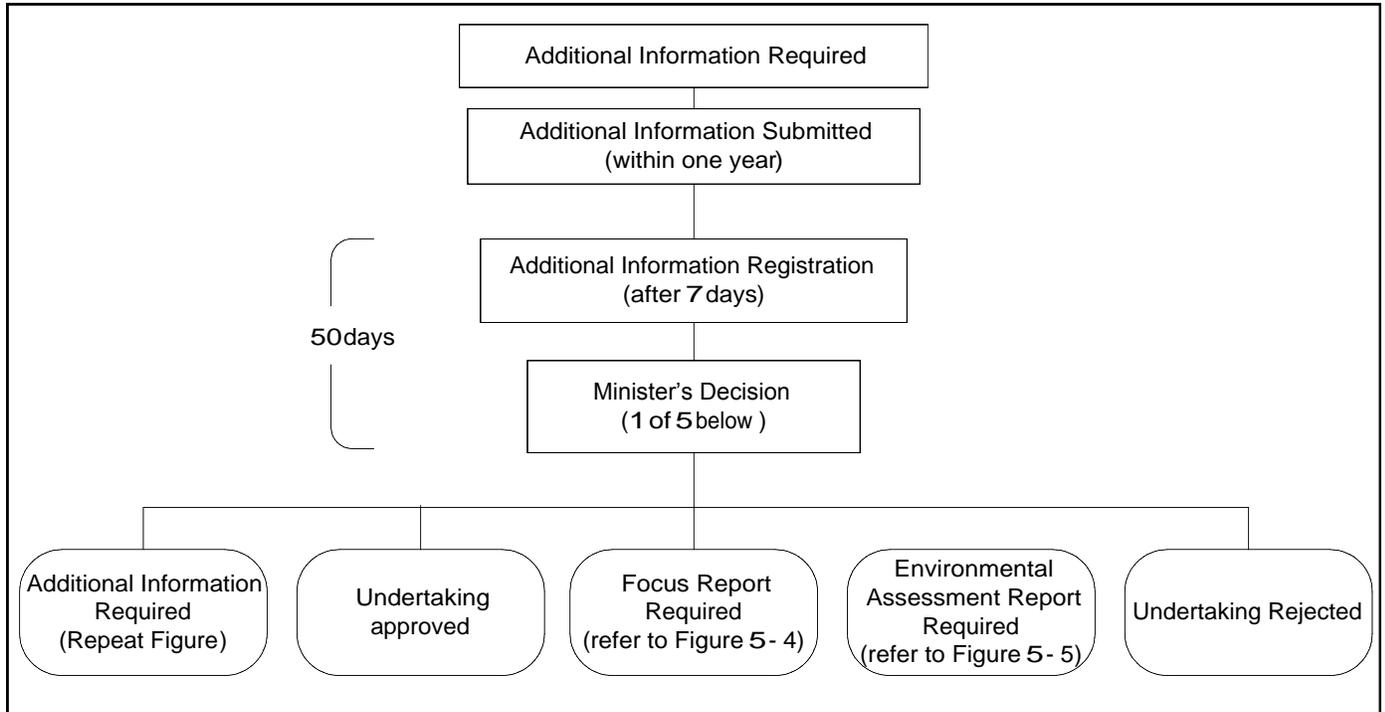
Under Section 138 of the *Environment Act*, a decision of the Minister to approve or reject an undertaking for environmental assessment cannot be appealed.

### *Additional Information Required*

The Minister may decide that additional information is required when the registration information is insufficient to allow the Minister to make a decision. The proponent then has one year to submit the requested information.

Once the information is submitted by the proponent, the Minister may or may not require a public review of the information.

The Minister can make one of the following decisions: a) additional information required; b) undertaking is approved; c) focus report required; d) EA report required; or e) undertaking is rejected (Figure 5-3).



**Figure 5-3: Additional Information Required**

*Approval*

The Minister may grant an approval when a review of the information indicates that there are no adverse effects or significant environmental effects which may be caused by the undertaking or that such effects are mitigable. The undertaking will be approved subject to specified terms and conditions and any other approvals required by statute or regulation. It is the responsibility of the proponent to identify and obtain all such approvals before commencing work on the undertaking.

EA approval is based upon the review of the conceptual design, environmental baseline information, impact predictions and any mitigation presented in the registration information. Any changes to the information in the registration document may require the proponent to re-register the undertaking for EA. Please refer to Section 7 of this guide for more information about other approvals that may be required of the proponent.

*Rejected*

The Minister may reject an undertaking when a review of the information indicates that there is a likelihood that the undertaking will cause adverse effects or significant environmental effects which are unacceptable.

If an undertaking is rejected, the proponent cannot proceed any further with the undertaking as proposed. The undertaking would have to be appropriately revised by the proponent before it could be registered again for EA.

*Focus Report Required*

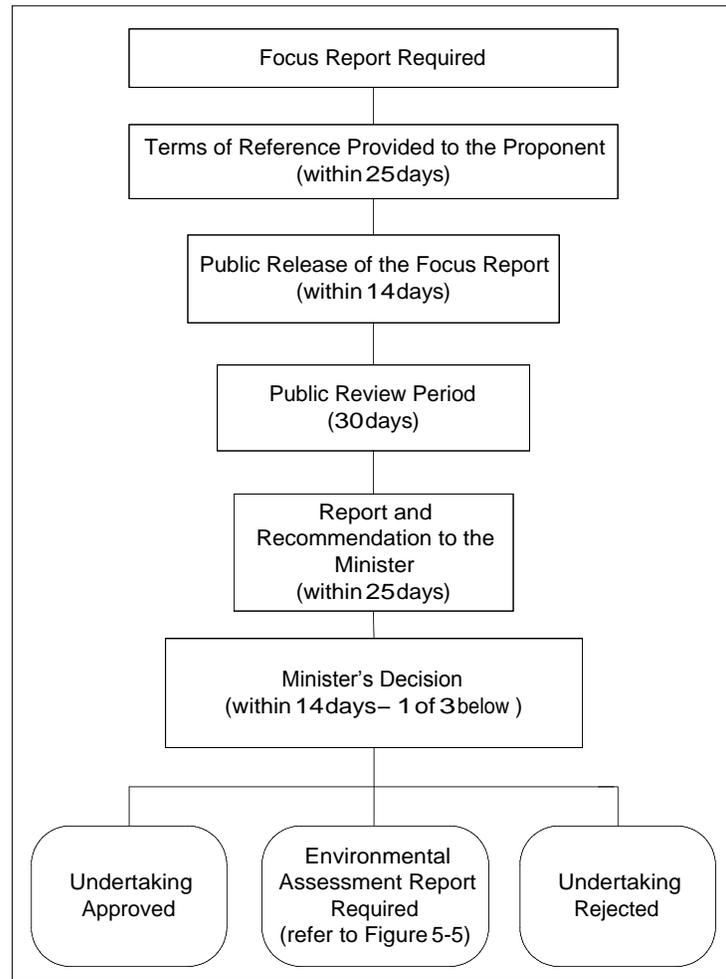
The Minister may decide that a focus report is required when a review of the registration document indicates that one or more specific aspects of the proposed project are unresolved, and those aspects may cause significant environmental effects or adverse effects (Figure 5-4).

The EA Branch will provide the proponent with terms of reference for the focus report. The proponent has up to one year to submit the required number of hard copies and an electronic copy of the focus report following receipt of the terms of reference. The EA Branch will notify the public of the release of the focus report for review and distribute the report to the government reviewers.

Following the review period, the EA Branch will provide the Minister with a report and recommendation for decision-making. The Minister must decide one of the following: a) undertaking is approved; b) EA report required (refer to Figure 5-5); or c) undertaking is rejected.

**How long is the public review period when a focus report is required?**

There will be a 30 day public review period once the focus report has been released to the public.



**Figure 5-4: Focus Report Required**

*Environmental Assessment Report Required*

The Minister may decide that an EA report is required when a review of the registration document indicates that several aspects of the proposed project are unresolved, and those aspects may cause significant environmental effects or adverse effects (Figure 5-5).

The EA Branch will prepare and release a proposed terms of reference for public review along with the registration document. The proponent will have an opportunity to reply to any comments submitted by the public, interest groups, First Nations and the government reviewers prior to receiving the final terms of reference from the EA Branch.

**How long is the public review period for the draft terms of reference and registration document?**

There will be a 30 day public review period once the draft terms of reference has been released to the public. Members of the public may phone, fax, email or submit written comments to the EA Branch.

Following receipt of the final terms of reference, the proponent will have up to two years to prepare and submit the report to the EA Branch. When the EA report has been submitted, an initial review will be carried out by the EA Branch to ensure that the terms of reference have been met. If the EA report does not meet the terms of reference, the proponent will be required to include further information before the EA report can be accepted.

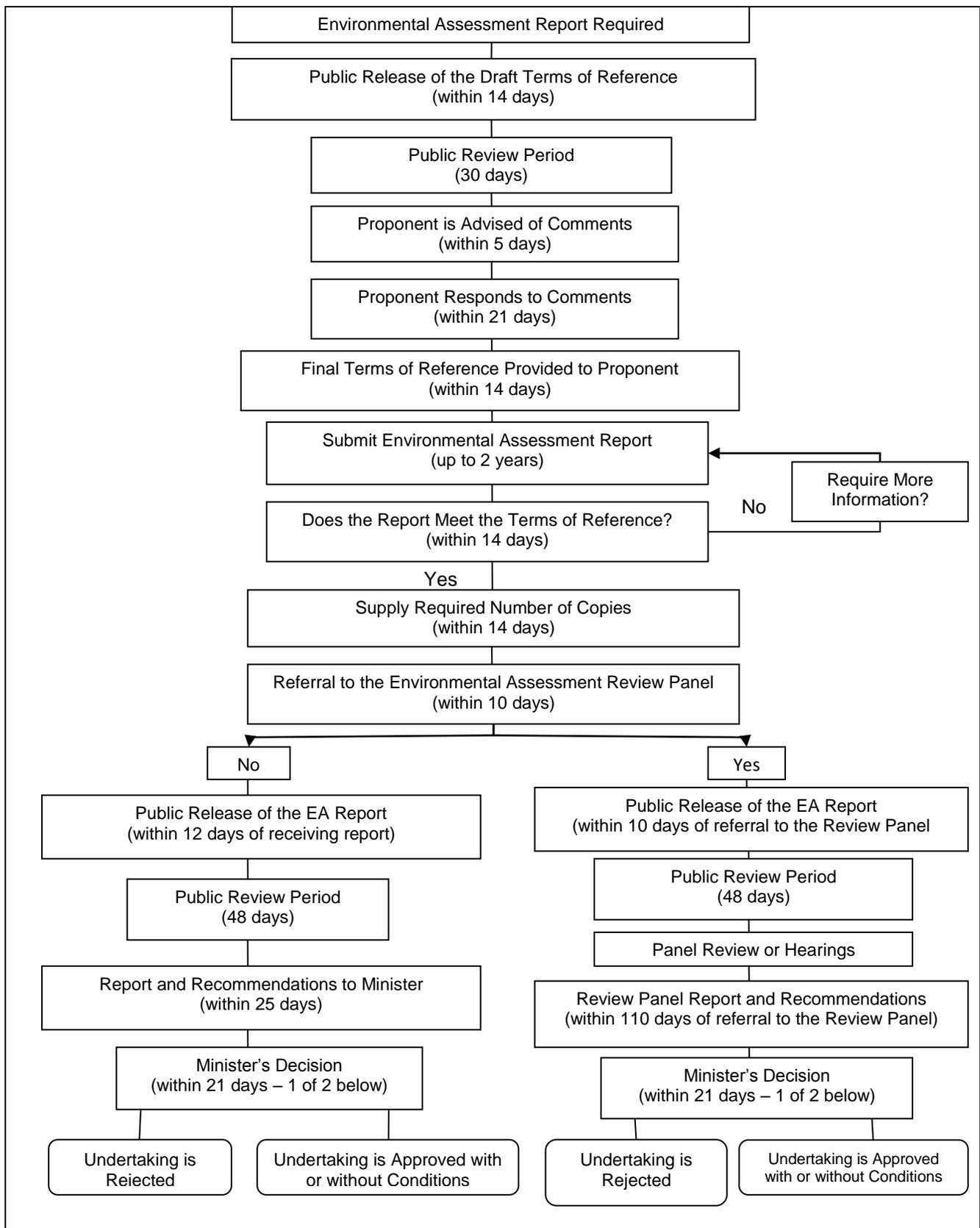
Once the EA report has been accepted by the EA Branch and the required number of hard copies and an electronic copy has been submitted, the Minister has the option to refer the EA report to the Environmental Assessment Review Panel (Review Panel) for review.

*EA Report is not Referred to the Review Panel*

If the EA report is not referred to the Review Panel, the EA Branch must notify the public of the review period for the report. Comments submitted by members of the public, various interest groups, First Nations and government reviewers will be summarized by the Administrator together with a report and recommendation for the Minister's consideration.

The Minister must decide one of the following: a) undertaking is approved with conditions; b) undertaking is approved without conditions; or c) undertaking is rejected.

# A Proponent's Guide to Environmental Assessment



**Figure 5 - 5 Environmental Assessment Report Required**

If the EA report is referred to the Review Panel, the Review Panel will notify the public of the report, and conduct a public review. Comments received from members of the public, various interest groups, First Nations and government departments will be considered by the Review Panel when making a recommendation to the Minister for a decision.

The Review Panel has the option to conduct public hearings following the public review. The purpose of the hearings is to:

- receive submissions and comments from any interested party;
- ask questions and seek answers respecting the environmental effects of an undertaking; or
- provide information which will assist the Review Panel in the preparation of its report and recommendations to the Minister.

Public hearings are conducted in a structured manner to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns in a non-judicial, informal and non-adversarial format. The length of the hearing will depend on the complexity of the issues and the number of submissions received.

In advance of any hearing, the Review Panel may request one or more meetings with the proponent to visit the site of the undertaking. The Review Panel may also conduct a pre-session conference to explain the rules of procedure for the hearing, identify participants and witnesses, define the issues, and estimate the length of the hearing and any other matter that may be considered appropriate.

Hearings are conducted in public and usually follow an established pattern. All evidence given during the hearing must be done under oath or affirmation. The proponent will begin by presenting the undertaking and addressing any issues that were raised in the EA report. Interested people will have an opportunity to address questions to the proponent during the hearings.

Following the proponent's initial presentation, other participants will be able to voice their concerns and provide information to the Review Panel. The proponent will have an opportunity to cross examine those participants following their presentations. Before the hearing is finished, the proponent will have the option to make a final presentation to the Review Panel in response to the matters raised at the hearing.

Following receipt of any written arguments, the Review Panel must submit a report and recommendation to the Minister for making a decision.

The Minister must decide one of the following: a) undertaking is approved with conditions; b) undertaking is approved without conditions; or c) undertaking is rejected.

### **How long is the public review period for an EA report?**

Whether the EA report is or is not referred to the Review Panel, there will be a 48 day public review period once the EA report has been released to the public.

If the EA report is referred to the Review Panel, and there are public hearings, the hearings must be completed within the 110 day time frame, and the Review Panel also must submit a report and recommendation to the Minister within the same time frame.

## 6. CLASS 2 UNDERTAKINGS

### 6.1 Registration

An EA for a Class 2 undertaking begins the day after the proponent submits the required number of hard copies and an acceptable electronic copy of the registration document to the EA Branch (Figure 6-1). As stated in Section 9 (1A) of the *Environmental Assessment Regulations*, the proponent is required to include project description information in the registration document.

### 6.2 Terms of Reference

The EA Branch will prepare and release a proposed terms of reference for public review, accompanied by the registration document. The proponent will have an opportunity to reply to any comments submitted by the public, interest groups, First Nations and the review committee prior to receiving the final terms of reference from the EA Branch.

**How long does it typically take to complete an environmental assessment for a Class 2 undertaking?**

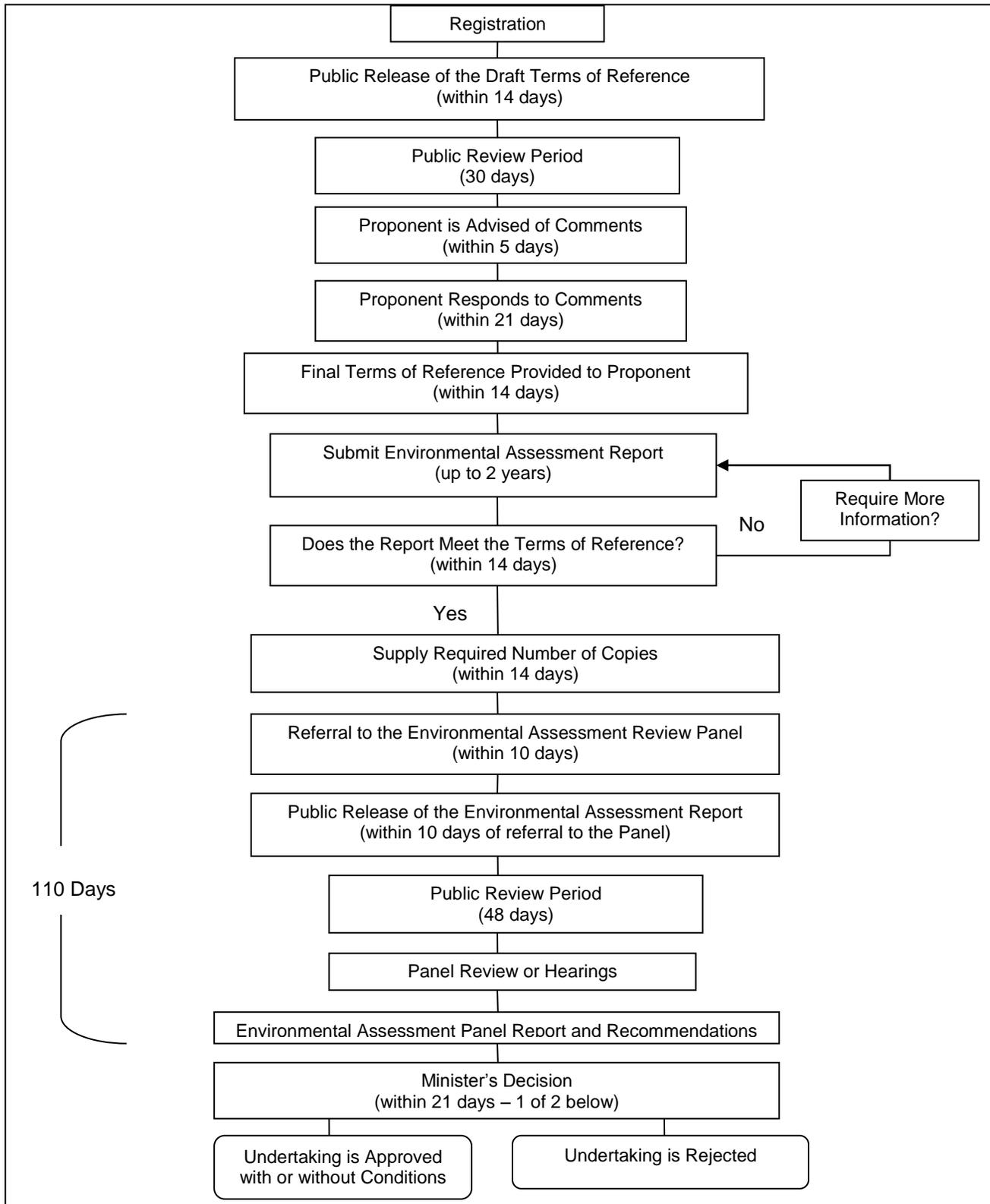
This type of environmental assessment typically takes 275 calendar days (8 – 9 months) of process time to complete, including the 110 days the EA Panel has to conduct a public review or hearings.

The proponent has up to two years outside of the review time to prepare the EA report.

**How long is the public review period for the proposed terms of reference and the registration document?**

There will be a 30 day public review period of the proposed terms of reference and registration document.

# A Proponent's Guide to Environmental Assessment



**Figure 6-1: Steps Required During an Environmental Assessment - Class 2**

### 6.3 Environmental Assessment Report

Following receipt of the final terms of reference, the proponent has up to two years to prepare and submit the EA report to the EA Branch. An initial review of the report will be carried out by the EA Branch to ensure that the terms of reference have been met. If the EA report information is not sufficient, the proponent will be required to include further information before the report can be accepted. Once the report is accepted by the EA Branch, the proponent must submit the required number of hard copies and an electronic copy of the report before it can be referred to the EA Panel.

### 6.4 Environmental Assessment Review Panel

Once the EA report is referred to the Review Panel, the Review Panel must notify the public of the report and conduct a public review. All comments received during the public review period will be considered by the Review Panel when making a recommendation to the Minister for a decision.

Instead of providing the Minister with a recommendation following the review period, the Review Panel may decide to conduct a public hearing to:

- receive submissions and comments from any interested party;
- ask questions and seek answers respecting the environmental effects of an undertaking; or
- provide information which will assist the Review Panel in the preparation of its report and recommendations to the Minister.

Please refer to page 26 of this guide for information on the public hearing procedures.

### 6.5 The Minister's Decision

The Minister must decide one of the following: a) undertaking is approved with conditions; b) undertaking is approved without conditions; or c) undertaking is rejected.

#### Approval with Conditions

A review of the information indicates that there are no adverse effects or significant environmental effects which may be caused by the undertaking or that such effects are mitigable, and the undertaking is approved subject to specified terms and conditions and any

**How long is the public review period for an EA report?**

There will be a 48 day public review period once the EA report has been released to the public.

If the Review Panel decides to conduct public hearings, the hearings must be completed within the 110 day period, and the Review Panel also must submit a report and recommendation to the Minister within the same time period.

other approvals required by statute or regulation. It is the responsibility of the proponent to identify and obtain all such approvals before commencing work on the undertaking.

EA approval is based upon the review of the conceptual design, environmental baseline information, impact predictions and any mitigation presented in the EA report. Any changes to the information in the registration document and EA report may require the proponent to re-register the undertaking for EA. Please refer to Section 7 of this guide for more information about other approvals required of the proponent.

#### Approval without Conditions

The undertaking is approved as proposed in the EA report subject to any other approvals required by statute or regulation. It is the responsibility of the proponent to identify and obtain all such approvals before commencing work on the undertaking.

EA approval is based upon the review of the conceptual design, environmental baseline information, impact predictions and any mitigation presented in the EA report. Any changes to the information in the registration document and EA report may require the proponent to re-register the undertaking for EA. Please refer to Section 7 of this guide for more information about other approvals required of the proponent.

#### *Rejected*

A review of the information indicates that there is a likelihood that the undertaking will cause adverse effects or significant environmental effects which are unacceptable and the undertaking is rejected. The Minister will provide written reasons stating why the undertaking is rejected.

If an undertaking is rejected, the proponent cannot proceed any further with the undertaking as proposed. The undertaking would have to be appropriately revised by the proponent before it could be registered again for EA.

## 7 OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED

EA approvals from the Minister are subject to obtaining all other necessary approvals, permits or authorizations required by municipal, provincial and federal acts, regulations, by-laws, guidelines, policies or standards before commencing work on the undertaking. It is the responsibility of the proponent to identify and obtain all such approvals, permits or authorizations before commencing work on the undertaking.

EA approvals are based upon the review of the conceptual design, environmental baseline information, impact predictions and mitigation presented in the registration document or EA report. Proposals by proponents for expansion or modification of any aspect of an undertaking must be submitted to the EA Branch for review and may require an EA.

Other approvals required under the *Environment Act* are listed under the *Activities Designation Regulations* (Appendix A). These approvals are broken down into the following six divisions:

- water approvals;
- pesticide approvals;
- municipal waste approvals;
- dangerous goods/waste dangerous goods/salvage yard approvals;
- industrial approvals; and
- other approvals.

The proponent is responsible for contacting the appropriate NSE Monitoring and Compliance Division Office (Appendix C) early to determine what approvals will be required. Failure to obtain necessary approvals before commencing work can result in a charged offence under the *Environment Act*.

**APPENDIX A**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT LEGISLATION**

**Nova Scotia Legislation:**

- Environment Act, c. 61, 2011  
(<http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/environment.pdf>)
- Environmental Assessment Regulations, N.S. Reg. 120/2017  
(<http://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/envassmt.htm>)
- Environmental Assessment Review Panel Regulations, N.S. Reg. 19/2013  
(<http://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/envreviewpanel.htm>)
- Activity Designation Regulations, N.S. Reg. 120/2016  
(<http://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/envactiv.htm>)

**Federal Legislation:**

To obtain *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and its regulations, please contact:

1801 Hollis St., Suite 200  
Halifax, NS B3J 3N4  
Tel.: 902-426-0564,  
Fax: 902-426-6550  
Email: [ceaa.atlantic@ceaa-acee.gc.ca](mailto:ceaa.atlantic@ceaa-acee.gc.ca)  
Website: <http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/>

**APPENDIX B  
CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Environmental Assessment Branch**

Nova Scotia Environment  
PO Box 442  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 2P8  
Phone: (902) 424-3600  
Fax: (902) 424-6925

**Information Access and Privacy Coordinator**

Nova Scotia Environment  
PO Box 442  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 2P8  
Phone: (902) 424-2985

**Mining One Window Committee Chairperson**

Manager - Mineral Development & Policy  
Department of Natural Resources  
1701 Hollis Street  
Halifax, NS  
Phone: (902) 424-7199

**Marine Renewable Energy One Window Committee Chairperson**

Director – Sustainable and Renewable Energy  
Department of Energy  
1690 Hollis Street  
Halifax, NS  
Phone: (902) 424-1700

**Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency - Atlantic Region**

1801 Hollis Street, Suite 200  
Halifax, NS B3J 3N4  
Phone: (902) 426-0564  
Fax: (902) 426-6550

**APPENDIX C**  
**NOVA SCOTIA ENVIRONMENT ADDRESSES**

**Main Office:**

1903 Barrington Street  
Suite 2085, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Halifax, NS

Mailing Address:

PO Box 442  
Halifax, NS B3J 2P8  
Phone: (902) 424-3600  
Fax: (902) 424-6925

**Monitoring and Compliance Division Offices:**

**Central Region**

30 Damascus Road  
Suite 115, Bedford Commons  
Bedford, NS B4A 0C1  
Phone: (902) 424-7773  
Fax: (902) 424-0597

**Northern Region**

36 Inglis Place, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Truro, NS

Mailing Address:

PO Box 824  
Truro, NS B2N 5G6  
Phone: (902) 893-5880  
Fax: (902) 893-0282

**Western Region**

136 Exhibition Street  
Kentville, NS B4N 4E5  
Phone: (902) 679-6086  
Fax: (902) 679-6186

## **APPENDIX D**

### **GLOSSARY**

Please refer to the *Environment Act*, *Environmental Assessment Regulations* and *Environmental Assessment Review Panel Regulations* for complete definitions.

#### **Administrator**

A person appointed by the Minister for the purposes of the Act, and includes an acting Administrator.

#### **Adverse Effect**

An effect that impairs or damages the environment or changes the environment in a manner that negatively affects aspects of human health.

#### **Commence Work**

To begin construction or site preparation activity for an undertaking or any part of an undertaking.

#### **Confidential Business Information**

Includes a trade secret and know-how, but does not include information about the environmental effects or associated mitigation measures of a proposed undertaking.

#### **Day**

A calendar day, except for December 23rd to January 2nd which are counted as 1 day.

#### **Environment**

The components of the earth and includes

- (i) air, land and water;
- (ii) the layers of the atmosphere;
- (iii) organic and inorganic matter and living organisms;
- (iv) the interacting systems that include components referred to in subclauses (i) to (iii); and
- (v) for the purposes of Part IV, the socio-economic, environmental health, cultural and other items referred to in the definition of environmental effect.

#### **Environmental Assessment**

A process by which the environmental effects of an undertaking are predicted and evaluated and a subsequent decision is made on the acceptability of the undertaking.

#### **Environmental Assessment Report**

A report that presents the results of an environmental assessment.

**Environmental Effect**

In respect of an undertaking,

- (i) any change, whether positive or negative, that the undertaking may cause in the environment, including any effect on socio-economic conditions, on environmental health, physical and cultural heritage or on any structure, site or thing including those of historical, archaeological, paleontological or architectural significance; and
- (ii) any change to the undertaking that may be caused by the environment, whether the change occurs inside or outside the Province.

**Extension**

An increase in size, volume or other dimension of an undertaking such that the increase may cause adverse effects or significant environmental effects if not properly mitigated.

**Focus Report**

A report that presents the results of an environmental assessment of a limited range of adverse effects that may be caused by the undertaking.

**Hearing**

A public hearing or review by a review panel under subsection 44(1) of the Act.

**Intervenor**

A person who has requested a time period to make a presentation at a hearing in accordance with Section 10 of the *Environmental Assessment Review Panel Regulations*.

**Minister**

The Minister of Environment

**Mitigate**

With respect to an undertaking, the elimination, reduction or control of the adverse effects or the significant environmental effects of the undertaking, and may include restitution for any damage to the environment caused by such effects through replacement, restoration, compensation or any other means.

**Modification**

A change to an undertaking that may cause adverse effects or significant environmental effects if not properly mitigated and includes, but is not limited to, the expansion of the same process, a change in products used or produced, and replacement of equipment with different technology other than that presently in use.

**Proponent**

A person who,

- (i) carries out or proposes to carry out an undertaking or activity;

- (ii) is the owner or person having care, management or control of an undertaking or activity.

**Review Panel**

A panel established by the Minister pursuant to subsection 42(1) of the Environment Act to conduct a review related to the environmental assessment of an undertaking.

**Significant**

With respect to an environmental effect, an adverse impact that occurs or could occur as a result of any of the following: the magnitude of the effect, the geographic extent of the effect, the duration of the effect, the frequency of the effect, the degree of reversibility of the effect, and/or the possibility of occurrence of the effect.

**Terms of Reference**

An outline of the information that must be included in a focus report and environmental assessment report.

**Undertaking**

A enterprise, activity, project, structure, work or proposal that, in the opinion of the Minister, causes or may cause an adverse effect or an environmental effect, and may include, in the opinion of the Minister, a policy, plan or program or a modification, extension, abandonment, demolition or rehabilitation, as the case may be, of an undertaking.

**Wetland**

Land commonly referred to as a marsh, swamp, fen or bog that either periodically or permanently has a water table at, near or above the land's surface or that is saturated with water, and sustains aquatic processes as indicated by the presence of poorly drained soils, hydrophytic vegetation and biological activities adapted to wet conditions.