

# 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 sector 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.

## CONSULTATION

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

## WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUAL EA?

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 a 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 which, when completed is submitted to the Minister of Environment. When preparing both the proposed ToR and the EA, the public must be consulted. The GTA West EA is this type of project.

## WHAT IS A CLASS EA?

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.

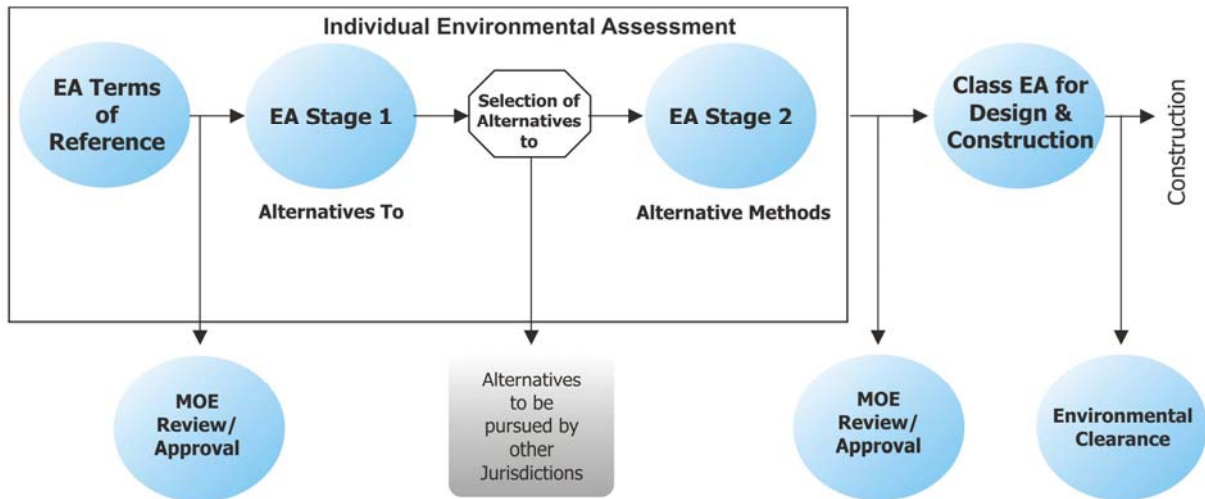
## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AS IT APPLIES TO THE GTA WEST CORRIDOR

Transportation planning projects, like the GTA West Corridor, are subject to the Ontario EAA. Given the size and scale of the GTA West Corridor and the potential for a wide range of environmental effects, the Ministry of Transportation is following the Individual EA process. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for this Individual EA was approved by the Minister of the Environment (MOE) on March 4, 2008.

The current EA study is being undertaken in two stages. Stage 1 is examining a full range of options (rail, marine, air, transit and roadways) for increasing transportation capacity in the GTA West Corridor Preliminary Study Area; it is expected to be completed in early 2010. Stage 2 will be initiated only if a new MTO undertaking (such as a highway or transitway, or highway widening) is identified as one of the preferred solutions. If other preferred solutions are identified, these will be pursued with other transportation agencies.

# ONTARIO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

## EA Process for the GTA West Corridor EA Study



## STUDY PROCESS FOR THE GTA WEST CORRIDOR EA STUDY

### TERMS OF REFERENCE & STAGE 1

1. Preparing of a Terms of Reference (approved in March 2008);
2. Examining transportation problems and opportunities (need for transportation improvements);
3. Screening modal alternatives and assembling combination alternatives (i.e. alternatives to the undertaking);
4. Assessing the alternatives;
5. Identifying preferred alternative(s); and,
6. Recommendations for future study in the GTA West Corridor.

Information on the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act Is available at:  
Ministry of the Environment  
<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/ea/index.htm>

**Contact Information**  
GTA West Project Team  
[www.gta-west.com](http://www.gta-west.com)  
Email: [project\\_team@gta-west.com](mailto:project_team@gta-west.com)