



MINUTES OF THE 240th MEETING OF THE JAMES BAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE

June 11, 2026

LOCATION

Hybrid (Videoconference & Montréal)

PRÉSENCES

Marc Dunn, Cree Nation Government
Graeme Morin, Cree Nation Government
Tina Petawabano, Cree Nation Government (remote)
Melissa Saganash, Cree Nation Government
Mélanie Chabot, Québec (remote)
Brigitte Goulet, Québec (remote)
Jean-Philippe Marcoux, Québec (remote)
Mélanie Savoie, Québec (remote)

Joëlle Boucher-Kirouac, Canada (remote)
Luc Denis, Canada
Benoit Péloquin, Canada
Madeleine Green, Canada

Michèle Leduc-Lapierre, Executive Director
Louis-Joseph Drapeau, Environmental Analyst
Jonathan Boucher, Contract Staff

GUESTS

Olivier Kolmel, Manager of Eco-Investments & Strategic Partnerships, Cree Nation Government
Pernilla Talec, Manager of Climate Change, Cree Nation Government
Killian Abellon, Coordinator of Climate Change Monitoring, Cree Nation Government
Kristy Franks, Environmental Advisor, Cree Nation Government
Cameron McLean, Manager of Environment, Cree Nation Government

WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Vice-Chair welcomes the members.

On a motion by Graeme Morin, seconded by Jean-Philippe Marcoux, the agenda (see [Appendix 1](#)) is adopted.

Note: The presentation on waste management will be cancelled later in the day as Mr. Joannis-Clement was unable to attend.

A round of introductions takes place.

ADMINISTRATION

Minutes of the 239th meeting and follow-up on actions

The Executive Director mentions that she received a proposal from a member for minor modifications to the English version of the minutes. The minutes are adopted on a motion by Luc Denis, seconded by Mélanie Savoie.

The Executive Director then follows up on the actions from the 239th meeting:

- The Analyst will follow up with Mélanie Savoie regarding the regional working group on waste management.
- The Executive Director drafted a letter of thanks following the meeting with the Provincial Administrator.
- Regarding the implementation of the strategic plan, the Analyst organised a subcommittee meeting to discuss projects and findings relating to transparency, and drafted an action plan for carrying out the measures set out in the surveillance and monitoring strategy.

- The Analyst is finalizing the summary of the forestry workshop and a thank-you letter. The presentations have been sent to the participants. A proposal for the next steps was discussed by the subcommittee and will be addressed later in the meeting.
- The Executive Director sent the proposed poster for IAIA 2026 to the members, and the document was then sent to Beesum.

Subcommittee and membership

With the arrival of a new member for the federal party, the list of subcommittees has been updated.

Next meetings

The Executive Director provides an update on the upcoming meetings.

The 241st meeting will take place in Eastman on September 16-18, 2026. Hotel rooms have been booked. Members are advised to inform the Secretariat as soon as possible if they are unable to attend in person, so that any unused rooms can be released.

The 242nd meeting will take place in Québec on the afternoon of November 19, 2026 and the morning of November 20, 2026.

Finances

The Executive Director shares the figures for the end of the 2026–2027 fiscal year with members and presents the plan to migrate to SharePoint.

The Executive Director goes on to provide an update on the administrative agreement and multi-year funding:

- A discussion took place with Vanessa Chalifour regarding an update to the file.
- The Ministry plans to issue guidelines this fall with a view to multi-year funding. A draft administrative agreement is expected in September 2026, followed by discussions in early October.
- Ms Chalifour is awaiting a meeting with the federal government to present the draft agreement.
- The following elements could be included in the new agreement: monitoring throughout the year rather than just at the end with the annual report; payment terms; a review of the agreement after a certain number of years.
- There is a desire to ensure that aspects of previous agreements which are no longer valid do not feature in the new agreement.

Performance reviews

This item is being discussed in camera.

FORESTRY – NEXT STEPS

The Analyst presents the new proposed approach to the JBACE's role in reviewing PAFITs, which is structured around four key areas:

- Continue to review the PAFITs;
- Have a regional feedback at the end of the process;
- Do closer monitoring during the implementation period;
- Strengthen collaboration throughout the review process.

He adds that a decision needs to be made on the best approach to take for the forthcoming reviews, as well as the follow-up measures to be taken over the coming months.

One member points out that the feedback will be a very interesting aspect. It will be important to keep an open mind, as previous reviews focused on certain aspects only. The aim is to improve the exercise.

The Analyst will contact Sabrina Morrisette (MRNF) to find out the date of submission of the next PAFIT to help us prepare a schedule. He will also organize another subcommittee meeting to finalise the approach and present the whole proposal at the September meeting.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Objective 1.1 Evaluate the legislative framework of the environmental and social protection regime

The Analyst mentions that there has been no progress since the last meeting.

Objective 1.2 Evaluate the transparency of the environmental and social impact assessment and review process

The Analyst presents an update on the file. The approach was clarified within the subcommittee and discussed with the new federal member. An update will be provided to the subcommittee members next July.

The next steps involve reviewing the Waswanipi LEET project (outside the criteria), discussing the adjustment of the coverage period to 2018–2026, the inclusion of new documents as part of the impact assessment, as well as amendments to the authorisation certificate and the environmental assessment. Consultation with Sophie Cooper of COMEX will be required to clarify these points.

Objective 1.3 Evaluate the follow-up and monitoring of authorized projects

The analyst explains that the parameters and criteria are still being developed and will be presented to the subcommittee at a later date. A meeting between the secretariats of the JBACE and the KEAC was organized to explore the possibility of collaboration. One member emphasizes the importance of taking into account the specific characteristics and differences inherent to each of the two territories.

Objective 1.4 Provide recommendations for the consideration of cumulative effects in the environmental and social impact assessment and review process

The Executive Director points out that the JBACE was approached by Vanessa Chalifour regarding the COMEX's concerns about the potential cumulative effects of the increase in mining projects on transport. We agreed to work on the issue and, as a first step, to prepare a report on the status of transportation. The JBACE hired Jonathan Boucher to prepare the report based on information contained in the Grande Alliance's feasibility studies. He is expected to have completed the report in English by mid-July. I will then translate it into French, and we will proceed with its official adoption next September.

A meeting was held with Ms. Chalifour a few weeks before the meeting to present the progress made and the table of contents to her. She was impressed by the work carried out so far and is very much looking forward to reading the report. She asked whether it would be possible to present it at a COMEX meeting this fall, once it has been approved.

Mr. Boucher then presents the report's table of contents. Following the presentation, members suggest some adjustments. Among other things, they highlight the importance of the exercise, given that transport is the main constraint facing the Territory, as well as the difficulty of producing a static overview given the changing use of roads, particularly within the forest road network. In the event that it is not possible to complete the report by the scheduled end of Mr. Boucher's contract, one member proposed exploring the possibility of extending the contract. The Executive Director notes that the budget allows for this. The members agree, and the Administrative Committee will approve the extension if necessary.

Objective 2.1 Meetings with strategic partners

The Executive Director informs members that the new Cree Administrator will be invited to the September meeting in Eastmain. In addition, numerous meetings took place during the IAIA conference in Quebec City in May 2026.

Objective 2.2 Improve the visibility and communications of the JBACE

The Executive Director notes that, in preparation for the IAIA conference, the Secretariat made some initial updates to the website. More substantial changes will be made over the summer, during which time the Communications subcommittee will be asked to assist with this work. The Secretariat is preparing a short paper to be submitted for the conference proceedings by the deadline of 30 June 2026. The document will be forwarded to the Communications subcommittee for review as soon as possible.

In addition, the promotional utensil kits we received have started to be handed out at the IAIA conference, and some are being given to today's presenters.

CREE NATION GOVERNMENT'S PRESENTATIONS

Eeyou Eco-Fund – Olivier Kolmel

Mr Kolmel explains that the Eeyou Eco-Fund is an umbrella fund for environmental initiatives led by the Crees, structured around three sources of funding from the Government of Quebec: the 2030 Nature Plan, the National Water Plan and the 2030 Green Economy Plan. Projects, which may be community-based or regional, must align with Quebec's strategies and are not subject to the Section 22 procedure. Mr. Kolmel gives some examples: documentaries on caribou, trail clearance, and awareness campaigns on hunting. The main challenge at present lies in promoting the programme and raising its profile.

Climate Change – Pernilla Talec and Killian Abellon

The work is organized around five key areas:

- Development of a regional adaptation plan in collaboration with the Climate Change Advisory Committee, comprising the GNC, the eleven Cree First Nations and other Cree organisations. This plan includes, in particular, an assessment of food security, the creation of an interactive map of local initiatives (traditional food sources, greenhouses, gardens, etc.) and an analysis of the effects of climate change on key species.
- Strengthening climate monitoring through improved weather forecasts, the installation of new weather stations, better access to data for communities, the establishment of a hydrometric network in partnership with UQAM and Hydro-Québec, and a pilot project to monitor ice conditions in Mistissini.
- Establishment of a knowledge hub aimed at raising awareness amongst GNC staff and local communities, in particular through the production of videos on ice safety and the development of an app in partnership with the CTA and Niskamoon.
- Developing a Cree economy rooted in the land, by exploring ways to generate income through conservation efforts and by assessing the natural capital of Eeyou Istchee.
- Implementation of a climate action plan focused on assessing greenhouse gas emissions to guide the GNC's reduction measures and sustainable development initiatives, with a particular focus on awareness-raising, transport and construction.

The Climate Change Unit faces a major funding challenge. In the absence of an agreement providing for dedicated funding for climate change issues, long-term planning is limited and only one permanent post is currently guaranteed.

Abandoned outfitters' camps – Graeme Morin

The case of the Nouchimi site illustrates the importance of the issues surrounding abandoned sites in the region. A former outfitter's camp, previously owned by Hydro-Québec, it includes a disused gas station. It is the subject of a remediation project by the MRNF. The preferred solution is to treat the contaminated soil off-site, as the land is currently in use and its users wish to see it restored to good condition as soon as possible.

PRESENTATION – MID-CANADA LINE

Kristy Franks and Cameron McLean, from the CNG, are presenting the work carried out as part of the clean-up of the Mid-Canada Line, at the 55th parallel. The clean-up work was undertaken between 1988 and 2002, but 42 sites remain to be cleaned up within the territory of the JBNQA and the NEQA to date.

The clean-up of these sites is the responsibility of the MELCCFP and is organized through various partnerships. A Canada–Québec agreement provides the framework for the decontamination of 36 of the 42 identified sites. At the same time, a pilot project brings together Quebec and the three Nations (Cree, Inuit and Naskapi) to tackle seven smaller sites, formerly used for the storage of fuel and equipment near watercourses. For all these operations, the bulk of the budget is allocated to the air transport of clean-up equipment. At present, the focus is on training local teams, capacity building, communicating with communities and purchasing equipment in preparation for the clean-up operations in the fall of 2026.

FILES

Northern Conservation Areas (NCA)

Mélanie Chabot from the MELCCFP presents an update on this initiative, which was launched in 2015. Stemming from the Nature Plan and enshrined in the legislation governing the Société du Plan Nord, this project aims to conserve 50% of the territory by 2035. Following a hiatus after the 2021 pre-consultation, the collaborative development of the approach has resumed within various committees. This culminated in a pilot project carried out with the Kativik Regional Government and the Naskapi Nation, which concluded on March 31, 2026. The next phase involves consolidating the achievements to integrate this new, more flexible concept into the Natural Heritage Conservation Act; however, this transition will require legislative amendments and formal approval of the mechanism. NCAs will act as buffer zones between conservation cores to maintain connectivity. The conservation objectives are to incorporate socio-cultural values, ecosystem goods and services, and the habitats of certain species.

Following the presentation, members discuss the topic. In response to a member's question as to whether the findings would be made public, Ms. Chabot states that the current internal reports and data from the pilot project remain confidential for the time being, but may be shared in the future. In response to another question, she states that no similar scheme exists in the northern territories, but that numerous initiatives have been studied elsewhere in the world and that the Ministry is drawing inspiration from initiatives such as California's mapping of conservation measures. As for the requirement to follow the Section 22 procedure for NCAs, this will be discussed within the northern committees. One member adds that discussions are currently underway within the MELCCFP in light of evolving concepts of conservation. NCAs could potentially be granted protected area status. They currently offer greater flexibility for projects in the public interest, subject to compensation. They will enable conservation measures to be applied at a macro level on land covered by mining claims, which will require discussions with the industry and a framework for activities exempt from environmental assessments or the REAFIE.

Debrief on IAIA 2026

The Executive Director and the Analyst present their key points on the IAIA conference held in Quebec City on May 19-22, 2026.

Issue-based approach: This approach proposes basing the project analysis on relevance and people rather than on excessive detail. It requires identifying, articulating and prioritising, from the outset, the genuine issues and concerns of project proponents or communities, whilst determining at what point these become decisive. Ultimately, the aim will be to assess how to integrate this evolving method into the Section 22 procedure.

Holistic approach: The assessment of societal impact is based on a holistic and equitable approach at the individual, family or national level. The decision to launch a project is based on a fundamental paradigm shift: it is no longer a question of simply validating its benefits, but of ensuring that the community will be better off as a result of its implementation. This vision forms part of the comprehensive 'One Health' approach, which links the health of ecosystems, humans and animals into an inseparable whole.

Cumulative effects: The BC Energy Regulator's model centralises the management of the life cycle of energy projects within a single, streamlined agency, including the assessment of cumulative effects (CE). In contrast, Australia's decentralised approach delegates responsibility for assessing CEs to project proponents, a practice that is far less established here. Furthermore, issues without a single point of responsibility – such as climate change and the mismatch between regional assessments and the priorities of local communities – complicate land-use management. To address this, the use of modelling tools and an integrative approach coordinating government strategies, academic research and spatial planning are essential to build a comprehensive picture of land use.

Communication: The excessive length and scattered nature of the data in impact assessment (IA) reports lead to confusion, fatigue and opposition, causing the public to focus on the negative risks. To address this, it is necessary to make the information easier for the public to understand, without oversimplifying it, as this would undermine transparency and trust. The use of visual aids, interactive maps and reports tailored to specific audiences (such as AQEI factsheets or versions targeted at Indigenous communities, regulators and leaders) would help to strike a balance between clarity and technical rigour.

Significant involvement of local stakeholders and Indigenous Nations early on in the process and throughout the project's life cycle is central to a project's realisation and implementation: Early engagement is becoming increasingly prevalent in Canada and internationally, but the resulting social and relational investments must never replace concrete measures to mitigate environmental impacts. It is essential to understand that providing input during consultations does not constitute participation in decision-making; hence the importance of co-creating decision-making spaces based on a holistic approach and the 'two-eyed seeing' approach. This involves, in particular, making Free, Prior and Informed Consent legally binding, thereby guaranteeing genuine decision-making power to Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous environmental assessment initiatives demonstrate the success of processes designed by and for communities. The Gitxaala Nation in British Columbia demonstrates that a framework based on its own laws speeds up decision-making whilst maintaining ongoing engagement, and the Fort McKay odour monitoring programme illustrates the success of a project based on continuous community involvement and the mobilisation of local capacities.

Simplification does not necessarily mean speeding things up – conditions for successful process reform: Process reform shows that simplification alone does not guarantee that projects will be accelerated. The conditions for success rest on rigorous planning of consultations and the establishment of accountability mechanisms to build mutual trust. This environmental and social credibility of projects will strengthen national unity, as illustrated by the model of the Gitxaala Nation, which is capable of conducting effective and rapid local Indigenous assessments without ever compromising consultation requirements. Building relationships of trust, communication and engagement with local communities and Indigenous Nations cannot therefore be rushed at any cost.

The importance of implementation in line with the IA: Two panels emphasized that a project's success depends on its actual implementation rather than on its initial plans. To put impact assessments into practice effectively, a regulatory framework that is binding yet realistic for the project proponent must be put in place, and, above all, it must be ensured that evaluation systems and implementation tools can be adapted to local realities through an adaptive management approach.

AJOURNMENT

The meeting is adjourned.

Prepared by Eva Wolf, Secretariat Officer and Michèle Leduc-Lapierre, Executive Director

Adopted on September 17, 2026



240th meeting of the JBACE

June 11, 2026, Montreal

Cree Nation Government (270 Prince St.), Spring Room or by Teams

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| 9:15 | Welcome and adoption of the agenda |
| 9:20 | Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adoption of the minutes of the 239th meeting and follow-up on actions - Subcommittees and membership - Next meetings - Finances - Performance reviews |
| 10:00 | Forestry – next steps |
| 10:45 | <i>Break</i> |
| 11:00 | Implementation of the Strategic Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.1: Legislative framework - 1.2: Evaluation of the transparency - 1.3: Follow-up and monitoring of authorized projects - 1.4: Cumulative impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Transportation project – Jonathan Boucher - 2.1: Meetings with strategic partners - 2.2: Communications |
| 12:00 | <i>Lunch (on site)</i> |
| 13:00 | Presentations – updates from the CNG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eeyou Eco Fund – Olivier Kolmel - Climate change – Pernilla Talec & Killian Abellon - Waste material – Raphael Joanisse-Clément |
| 14:30 | <i>Break</i> |
| 14:45 | Presentation – Mid-Canada Line – Kristy Franks |
| 15:30 | Implementation of the Strategic Plan (continued, if necessary) |
| 16:00 | Files <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Northern conservation areas – Mélanie Chabot - Defrief from IAIA 2026 |
| 16:30 | Adjourn |