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# Technical Advisory Committee on Science and Knowledge Interim Terms of Reference – September 2019

## Mandate

The Technical Advisory Committee on Science and Knowledge will provide the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) with information and expert advice on matters related to environmental assessments, impact assessments as well as regional and strategic assessments. Topics that may be examined by the Committee include scientific, environmental, health, social, economic and gender issues as well as Indigenous knowledge. The Committee will be comprised of experts working in their personal capacity who will provide advice to the Agency that is non-project specific (i.e., broader than individual assessments of designated projects). As the Committee will operate independently of the Agency, the Agency will not speak on the Committee's behalf.

The Committee's mandate is distinct from that of the [Indigenous Advisory Committee](#).

The Committee will operate in an open and transparent manner, with final records of proceedings and committee reports made publicly available on the Agency's website, subject to confidentiality requirements under legislation or governmental policies.

The Agency will provide orientation to new members so that they can learn about the mandate of the Agency, applicable processes, and roles and responsibilities of Committee members. The Agency will also provide a secretariat to support the administration of the Committee.

## **Membership Selection and Nomination Process**

Members of the Committee will serve as knowledgeable individuals in their own right and in their personal capacity in the best interests of Canadians. They will not represent their firms, organizations, or professional affiliations.

## **Membership Considerations**

The Committee is composed of members who have expertise in fields relevant to the Committee's mandate. Two members will act as the co-chairs. Membership may be adjusted to ensure the appropriate representation of expertise and experience.

Membership for the Committee will include at least one Indigenous person. The Agency's Director General, Strategic Policy or the designated representative of the Director General will participate in Committee meetings as an ex-officio non-voting member to represent the Agency, but will not be a member of the Committee. The main roles of the ex-officio member are to work with the appointed co-chairs on the Committee's

forward agenda and in facilitating meetings as well as to act as a liaison between the Committee and the Agency, identifying and setting expectations around confidential discussions and information and ensuring that the information and advice provided by the Committee is shared within the Agency.

## **Invited Guests and Sub-committees**

Guests can be invited to participate in the Committee or a sub-committee when additional or specific expertise is required. The secretariat may invite guests to attend particular meetings or join the Committee or sub-committee for a defined time period. If deemed required, the Agency may allow the creation of sub-committees involving both Committee members and invited guests.

## **Cooperation with the Indigenous Advisory Committee**

Efforts will be facilitated by the Agency to ensure there is a productive exchange of ideas, on issues of important to both Committees, between the TAC and the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC (Indigenous Advisory Committee)). Interaction could be encouraged through such mechanisms as may be considered beneficial by the members of both committees and could include presentations by one Committee at the other's meetings, sharing documents electronically for input, and sharing each other's forward agendas.

## Conflict of Interest

To be considered for appointment, potential members of the Committee are required to complete a conflict of interest disclosure form provided by the Agency. The completed declaration will be considered confidential and the Agency will not disclose any information in the declaration without the member's permission or otherwise required by the *Privacy Act* or the *Access to Information Act*.

Should their personal situation change, it is incumbent upon the member to update all information, including their disclosure of conflict of interests, in writing. The Committee's secretariat will review reports prior to appointment, on an ongoing basis, and as updates occur.

Members are encouraged to provide their short biography and a photo to publish on the Agency's website to enhance the Committee's visibility to the public.

Members are also expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and provide advice exclusively in their personal capacity; the use of their positions cannot be reasonably construed to be for their private gain or that of any other person, company, or organization. Members are required to avoid real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest and are expected to recuse themselves on issues where necessary.

## Travel and Expenses

An amount will be provided to all members to recognize their preparation for and participation in meetings. The Agency will also reimburse members' approved travel expenses in accordance with relevant Government of Canada policies including the National Joint Council Travel Directive. The secretariat will supply members with a copy of the directive and provide assistance as needed.

## **Tenure**

Co-chairs and members are appointed by the Agency for two or three year terms. Members may be re-appointed for additional terms at the discretion of the Agency. The Agency will endeavor to ensure that appointments of co-chairs and members are staggered to allow for continuity and systematic rotation of membership while having the assigned term lengths reflect the preferences of the committee members to the extent possible.

## **Resignation and Replacement Process**

Members should provide two weeks' notice of their intent to resign. The resignation notice must be in writing and be addressed to the Agency. The letter should state the effective date of resignation.

## **Reasons for Termination**

The Agency retains the power to end a member's appointment. A member's failure to act according to the Terms of Reference, to avoid real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest or attend Committee meetings without satisfactory reason may give cause for termination.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Members**

Members of the Committee have a responsibility to offer their independent and expert advice. Other responsibilities include:

- being available and prepared to participate in meetings, including in-person meetings, conference calls, videoconferences, etc.;

- participating in discussions before the Committee prepares its advice to the Agency;
- notifying the secretariat and co-chairs of any changes in the status of their assets, liabilities and outside employment/activities relevant to the mandate of the Committee; and

## **Appointed Co-Chairs**

The two co-chairs of the Committee are selected and appointed by the Agency. In addition to all responsibilities of a member, the co-chairs are responsible for:

- overseeing and chairing meetings;
- facilitating discussions among Committee members;
- providing input on the Committee meeting agenda;
- coordinating the development of Committee reports and other deliverables as well as ensuring delivery of Committee input to the Agency;
- providing input to the secretariat on the selection of members, replacement and termination of appointments; and
- supporting, in any other way, the fulfillment of the Committee's mandate.

## **Secretariat**

The secretariat to the Committee is housed in the External Relations & Strategic Policy Sector of the Agency. The secretariat acts as the administrative liaison between Committee members and the Agency, and also as a resource for members. The secretariat provides advice on the management of the Committee and works closely with the co-chairs. In addition, the secretariat:

- coordinates the member appointment process;
- coordinates preparation of the meeting agendas, records of proceedings and reports;
- assists the appointed co-chairs with reports on specific topics;
- at the identification and request of the Committee, considers engaging contractors in the development of a specified work product;
- supports the Committee in organizing invited guests and sub-committees
- provides administrative support to Committee members;
- supports public access to information about the Committee, as appropriate;
- prepares information and conducts background research for the Committee;
- maintains a list of forward agenda items and nominees;
- organizes meeting logistics;
- monitors and evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee; and
- carries out any additional duties, as appropriate, in support of the Committee.

## **Ex-Officio Member**

The Agency's Director General of Strategic Policy will act as an ex-officio non-voting member of the Committee and a liaison between the Committee and the Agency. In this role, the Director General or their designated representative:

- acts as the Agency's official with lead responsibility for the Committee, including decision making on Committee and secretariat administration and operation;

- works closely with the co-chairs on the Committee's forward agenda and in facilitating and coordinating meetings;
- acts as a liaison between the Committee and the Agency, ensuring that the information and advice provided by the Committee is shared within the Agency;
- reports back to the Committee at the beginning of each meeting on next steps and, if applicable, the impact of the advice received; and
- identifies when information and discussions are considered confidential and clarifying expectations regarding this protected information.

The Director General or the designated representative of the Director General does not participate in formulating the committee's report and recommendations.

# Management and Administration

## Transparency

The Agency is committed to transparency as an operating principle. All activities of the Committee are to be transparent with the exception of occasional confidential items that may arise.

To ensure that members speak freely during Committee meetings and with regard to the advice that they provide to the Agency, the Committee's meeting records and Committee reports will be non-attributable.

## Deliberations, Decision-making and Reports

An open dialogue will be actively encouraged by co-chairs and the TAC Secretariat, to be supported by Committee members. Discussions that elicit the full range of perspectives held by Committee members will be



encouraged as part of the Committee's value is its diversity. Achieving consensus by Committee members on any particular issue is not required.

Records of proceedings, highlighting the key discussions and decisions, will be prepared by the secretariat and circulated for review and final approval to the co-chairs and the Agency's Director General, Strategic Policy. Final records of proceedings will be posted on the Agency's website.

Committee expertise may also be provided to the Agency in the form of a Committee report jointly developed by designated members of the Committee. Reports are non-attributable; there will be no references to comments made by individual members. Under circumstances where there are divergent views among Committee members on a topic, reports may be written such that they present each of the perspectives (i.e., the Committee is not obligated to reach consensus). Committee reports will be posted on the Agency's website.

For clear and consistent messaging, members should direct media inquiries to the co-chairs. The co-chairs may also seek assistance from the Agency's Communications team for engaging with the media. Members may speak about the Committee's past and documented activities in their professional communities.

At least nine of the members need to be present in order for this to be an official meeting. All members must have the opportunity to provide input into the preparation of the advice to be provided. This can include the opportunity to provide input by email.

## **Meeting Agendas**

The Secretariat, with regard to the forward agenda set by Committee members, and in consultation with the co-chairs, prepares the meeting agenda. At each full Committee meeting there will be a discussion of the

forward agenda and the relative priority of items that are identified on it.

## **Meeting Notice and Invitations**

All meetings are scheduled at the call of the Agency's Director General, Strategic Policy in consultation with the co-chairs. Depending on the nature of topics to be discussed, the meeting may be open to observers, such as other federal departments, and invited guests based on an understanding between the Agency and the co-chairs.

The secretariat is responsible for organizing, scheduling and circulating all meeting material. As a standard practice, barring exceptional circumstances, members will generally receive the agenda and background material in advance of the meeting. Presentations by members or others will be circulated in advance of the meeting, where feasible.

If a Committee member is unable to attend a meeting in person or via conference call, the meeting will be carried out in their absence without alternates in their place. At least 9 of 13 of the voting members need to be present or able to attend by videoconference or teleconference for a meeting to be proceed. In the event that one co-chair is unable to attend, the other co-chair will chair the meeting. If both co-chairs are expected to be absent for a meeting, they will nominate one to two members to chair the meeting in their place.

## **Frequency, Type, and Location of Meetings**

Meetings will generally be held three to four times a year in the National Capital Region or elsewhere on an occasional basis. Additional meetings and/or teleconferences may be held on an as-needed basis at the discretion of the Agency's Director General, Strategic Policy, in consultation with the co-chairs.

## **Observers**

Depending on the nature of topics being discussed, individuals, organizations, or other government departments may observe a meeting or parts of a meeting. Observers do not provide input on agenda items and do not participate in the formulation of advice or recommendations to the Agency.

A limited number of federal employees may be permitted to observe a meeting of the Committee. Priority consideration will be given to those officials whose duties are of relevance to the mandate of the Committee.

## **Language of Work**

Committee work will be performed in either official language in accordance with the *Official Languages Act*.

## **The Agency's Response to Committee Advice**

The Agency will consider the Committee's advice in its policies, operations, and decision-making. The Agency will report quarterly to members on how the Committee's advice was used by the Agency.

## **Review**

A formal review may be conducted periodically to determine whether administrative, management or other improvements are required to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee. The review may be conducted by Agency officials or by an external body. A review report will be submitted to the Agency's Director General, Strategic Policy, and may be shared with Committee members.

In addition, the co-chairs in collaboration with the Agency's Director General, Strategic Policy, may decide to review the mandate, activities and Terms of Reference for the committee as needed. The members would be involved in the review. In addition, recommendations for improvement will be considered on an ongoing basis.

**Date modified:**

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