



Naskapi Nation of Nation Naskapi de KAWAWACHIKAMACH

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BY EMAIL

Senate Special Committee
Senate of Canada
Email: cscf@sen.parl.gc.ca

October 29, 2026

SUBJECT: Bill C-39 Building Canada Strong Act: Comments of the Naskapi Nation

Dear Members of the Senate Special Committee,

On September 21, 2026, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-39, An Act respecting certain measures to strengthen the economy (the Building Canada Strong Act), which proposes amendments to several federal laws, including the Impact Assessment Act, aimed at streamlining and accelerating federal legislative, regulatory and approval processes applicable to infrastructure and resource development projects.

Part of the Naskapi traditional territory is covered by the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (the "JBNQA") and the *Northeastern Quebec Agreement* (the "NEQA"), two modern treaties within the meaning of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. As such, their provisions are legally binding on the governments of Québec and Canada, and the rights of the Naskapi recognized and affirmed therein benefit from constitutional protection. This constitutional protection encompasses the environmental and social impact assessment and review processes provided by Section 23 of the JBNQA and Section 14 of the NEQA.

Bill C-39 does not specify how its proposed amendments relate to the JBNQA and NEQA territory, but the Naskapi Nation affirms that any federal major projects framework must respect the Nation's treaty rights and the constitutionally mandated consultation and participation processes.

Although it is clear that the JBNQA and NEQA will not permit the full application of the proposed federal reforms within the treaty territory, the Naskapi Nation also asserts Aboriginal rights and title in parts of Labrador, where these reforms could apply in full. The Nation therefore considers it appropriate to provide its views on Bill C-39, without prejudice to its rights and interests.

The Naskapi Nation previously submitted comments to the Government of Canada on July 22, 2026, concerning the discussion paper entitled *Getting Major Projects Built in Canada: Discussion Paper on Proposed Legislative, Regulatory and Policy Reforms*. Since then, the Nation has attended two technical briefings held on September 22 and October 2, 2026, concerning the proposed legislative reforms related to Bill C-39. While these briefings provided information on the proposed changes, they did not constitute formal consultation with the Naskapi Nation.



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Furthermore, the Nation was not informed of the opportunity to submit written comments to the Legislative Committee examining Bill C-39 until shortly before the Committee's submission deadline. This provided the Nation with insufficient time to properly review the legislation, consult internally and prepare its comments.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, the Naskapi Nation wishes to bring forward its concerns regarding the proposed legislative amendments. Accordingly, please find attached its comments on Bill C-39, which build upon the concerns previously raised by the Nation, while taking into account the provisions now before Parliament.

Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Ms. Lindsay Richardson at richardson@atmacinta.com.

Best regards,

Nathan Uniam
Deputy Chief
Environment Portfolio, Naskapi Nation

- att. Naskapi Nation. October 29, 2026. *Bill C-39, Building Canada Strong Act: Comments of the Naskapi Nation.*
- c.c. Ms. Stella Pien, Director General, Naskapi Nation, for distribution to Chief and Council
Mr Billy Shecanapish, Environment Officer, Naskapi Nation
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Bill C-39, Building Canada Strong Act:

Comments of the Naskapi Nation

October 29, 2026

General comments

The Naskapi Nation recognizes that the Government of Canada is seeking to improve coordination, efficiency and predictability in the review of infrastructure and resource development projects. Bill C-39 proposes amendments to several federal laws, including the Impact Assessment Act (the “IAA”), to accelerate federal review and decision-making processes. The Nation understands that certain amendments proposed under Bill C-39, including those concerning review timelines and coordinated consultation, would apply broadly to designated projects under the IAA, and not solely to projects considered to be of national interest. The Nation is concerned that applying accelerated review timelines to all such projects could limit the time available for thorough environmental review and meaningful Indigenous participation.

Coordinated processes can be helpful where they reduce duplication, improve communication and increase transparency. However, streamlining must not weaken environmental review, Indigenous engagement or the proper recognition and consideration of Indigenous rights, interests and knowledge. Several amendments proposed through Bill C-39, particularly the one-year federal review timeline and changes to the coordination of federal authorizations and consultation processes, raise concerns about prioritizing speed over the thorough review required for responsible project development.

The Naskapi Nation has observed first-hand that when development projects move too quickly or prioritize cost savings, the results can be extremely harmful to the social and biological environments, erode trust with proponents and regulatory approval processes, and lead to greater costs in the long term. For example, poorly planned mining-related infrastructure in the Schefferville region, including haul road construction, has contributed to recurring contamination events affecting lakes and rivers, and has limited Naskapi access to parts of the Naskapi traditional territory. These impacts required years of follow-up and repair, illustrating how insufficient planning and cost-saving approaches can create long-term social, environmental, financial, and trust-related consequences. The Naskapi Nation believes that the Government of Canada should instead focus on proper project planning and responsible resource development, without fast-tracking projects at the expense of environmental protection and Indigenous rights and interests.

Review timelines and timely decision-making

Bill C-39 proposes amendments to the IAA aimed at ensuring that federal reviews and decisions are completed within one year after all required information and studies have been received from the project proponent. The Naskapi Nation is concerned that this timeline may place undue pressure on Indigenous consultation, engagement and review processes, which require informed and meaningful participation by concerned Indigenous Nations. Such participation requires sufficient time to review the environmental impact study and related documentation, seek technical advice, coordinate internally, engage with

community members, prepare written comments outlining concerns, and participate in iterative exchanges with the proponent and the Government of Canada. This includes the opportunity to ask questions, request clarifications, receive complete responses and assess whether concerns have been understood and considered. Furthermore, in northern and remote contexts, informed and meaningful participation may require flexibility and additional time to take into account logistical realities, limited technical capacity, language considerations and seasonal land-based activities.

Coordination of Crown consultation

Bill C-39 proposes amendments to the IAA to improve the coordination of consultations with Indigenous groups in relation to designated projects. In principle, improved coordination could help reduce duplication, minimize consultation fatigue, and optimize how comments, concerns and recommendations are considered when the Naskapi Nation is asked to participate in overlapping environmental impact assessment and consultation processes involving multiple government departments and agencies for the same project. A single coordinated, project-wide consultation process, developed in collaboration with the Naskapi Nation, could improve clarity and efficiency while maintaining meaningful participation. However, the Naskapi Nation is concerned that harmonization of processes coupled with the one-year timeline could become a way to compress consultation and engagement if it is used to reduce the number of opportunities for the Nation to review information, ask questions, provide comments or validate how its concerns are considered. While consultation should be coordinated as one coherent process for the whole project, coordination must not be mistaken for consolidation. Engagement must remain thorough, address all aspects of the project, and continue throughout all key stages of the review until a final decision is made (and beyond in most cases).

Canada Energy Regulator and Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission project reviews

Bill C-39 proposes amendments to the IAA and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act that would change how certain projects regulated by the Canada Energy Regulator (“CER”) and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (“CNSC”) are reviewed. In particular, the proposed amendments would provide for the CNSC to conduct impact assessments of designated projects involving activities regulated under the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act*, and for the CER to act as the sole assessor of certain projects under its jurisdiction. The Naskapi Nation is concerned that these proposed amendments would reduce the independence and transparency of federal impact assessments, particularly for major energy, pipeline, transmission, nuclear and uranium projects, which may have significant environmental, social and cumulative effects.

The Naskapi Nation seeks clarity on how consultation with concerned Indigenous Nations would be conducted through these processes, including whether such consultation would be led by the CER or the CNSC, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, or another federal body. Projects overseen by the CER or the CNSC should remain subject to a rigorous impact assessment process, with adequate and meaningful consultation of concerned Indigenous Nations throughout the review, as is currently implemented by IAAC.

Regions of national interest

Bill C-39 proposes amendments to the Building Canada Act that would allow the Governor in Council to designate regions of national interest and establish a framework to facilitate the review and authorization

of certain projects within those regions. The Naskapi Nation believes that such zones will add an administrative burden rather than reduce it, since their establishment requires extensive planning, consultation, coordination, and assessment before any project-specific review begins.

Furthermore, these regions of national interest should not be used to pre-approve or facilitate future development without a thorough regional or strategic environmental assessment (“REA/SEA”) (including a full Cumulative Effects Assessment) and without continued project-specific review and consultation. While the Nation recognizes that REA/SEA can be a useful tool to support advance planning and establish appropriate conditions, limits or thresholds, it must be Indigenous-informed, adequately funded, and developed with meaningful participation of concerned Indigenous Nations. Most importantly, a REA/SEA must not replace project-specific impact assessments. Each project must still be reviewed with the concerned Nations, in relation to any conditions, limits or thresholds established through the REA/SEA, and in light of Indigenous rights, interests, knowledge and priorities.

Conclusion

The Naskapi Nation expects that its comments will be acknowledged and meaningfully incorporated by the Legislative Committee examining Bill C-39 and by the Government of Canada.

The Naskapi Nation strongly believes that decisions about infrastructure and resource development projects must be made with the impacted Indigenous Nations and with respect for and careful consideration of long-term and cumulative impacts. The Government of Canada’s approach to major project reform should therefore support responsible development, meaningful consultation, strong environmental protection, and decision-making that looks beyond short-term economic objectives. Rather than focusing primarily on accelerating extraction and project approvals, the Government of Canada should support approaches that create long-term sustainable value within the country while respecting the rights and interests of the Naskapi Nation, including its constitutionally protected treaty rights under the JBNQA and the NEQA and its Aboriginal rights and title in Labrador, and protecting the lands and resources on which the Naskapi depend.