



ON BEHALF OF



**Pathways
Alliance**

VIA EMAIL

November 18, 2025

Beaver Lake Cree Nation
PO Box 960
Lac La Biche, AB T0A 2C0
Attention: Chief Gary Lameman
gary@blcn.ca

Frog Lake First Nations
PO Box 621
Frog Lake, AB T0A 1M0
Attention: Chief Greg Desjarlais
gregdesjarlais@froglake.ca

Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation
PO Box 271
Goodfish Lake, AB T0A 1R0
Attention: Mr. Darryl Steinhauer
Darryl.steinhauer@gmail.com

Dear Chief Lameman, Chief Desjarlais and Mr. Steinhauer:

Re: Designation Request for Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network and Storage Hub (the Pathways Project)
File Number for Consultation: FNC202451569

We are in receipt of your letter dated September 19, 2025, provided to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the **Agency**) by Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Frog Lake First Nations, and Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation #128 (the **Nations**). That letter is a follow up to the December 2, 2024 request for federal designation (the **Designation Request**) previously made by the Nations under Section 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act* (the **Act**).

Canadian Natural Resources Limited on behalf of the members of Pathways Alliance (**Canadian Natural**), recognizes that the Nations directed their queries to the Agency and shared their letter with the Pathways Project's Consultation and Engagement Team for awareness. In light of the nature of the queries raised, in Canadian Natural's view, the Nations and the Agency would benefit from a response and update from Canadian Natural regarding the status of the Pathways Project. This letter is intended to solely reflect Canadian Natural's views and is not intended to overlap, intervene, or contradict matters that are wholly within the Agency's jurisdiction.

To that end, Canadian Natural's response focuses on the sharing the following information with the Nations:

- the need for continuing the suspension of the designation request,
- status of the regulatory process for the Pathways Project,
- approach to the provincial regulatory process and filings, and
- recent and anticipated activities for Q4 2025.

Basis for Continued Suspension of Response to Designation

Following the Designation Request, the Agency made information requests of Canadian Natural pursuant to subsection 9(1) of the Act. On December 13, 2024, Canadian Natural requested a suspension of the 90-day time limit to respond to allow for sufficient time to address the information requested by the Agency. That request was granted on December 13, 2024, with the suspension to remain in effect until "[Canadian Natural] has provided IAAC with the information requested".¹ It is our understanding that the process for the Designation Request will resume once Canadian Natural responds to the Agency's information request.

¹ <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/document/160312>

In your recent letter, the Nations have questioned the continued applicability of the suspension. The rationale for the suspension is directly tied to the status of the Pathways Project, as previously outlined in our response of March 4, 2025 to the Treaty 6 First Nations, including the Nations, and as is further explained below.

Canadian Natural has strived to keep Indigenous groups informed on the status of project development, regulatory processes, and submissions through: (a) application notifications; (b) the preparation and distribution of plain language Fact Sheets which summarize environmental and historical resources surveys, pipeline safety, and emergency response planning; (c) Project Update Newsletters; and (d) an updated Project Overview, which was provided to the Nations in August 2025. In addition, the “Pathways Project Map Viewer” was developed specifically for the benefit of Indigenous groups and stakeholders to provide them with the geographic location of each pipeline segment within the Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network and the associated regulatory information. In person meetings and information sessions have been and will continue to be held by Canadian Natural as an important part of the consultation and engagement process. Through these various and ongoing communication efforts, we have endeavoured to be open and transparent about the fact that the Pathways Project has not advanced at the pace originally envisioned.

As detailed in the sections below, Canadian Natural has not yet reached the point in the provincial regulatory processes for the Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network or Storage Hub whereby it is able to provide the information sought by the Agency. There is a substantial amount of work that must still be accomplished (including but not limited to further consultation and engagement with Indigenous groups) prior to Canadian Natural being in a position to respond. This will become apparent based on the Project status described below.

Status of Regulatory Process for the Pathways Project

Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network

The regulatory approval process for the Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network is administered by the Alberta Energy Regulator (**AER**) to be consistent with policies, standards and frameworks established by the Government of Alberta. The majority of the regulatory applications submitted to date for the Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network are pipeline agreement (**PLA**) applications under the Alberta *Public Lands Act* for the proposed pipeline right-of-way (**ROW**). These PLA applications are prepared based on the Government of Alberta’s technical survey standards and must be organized in approximately 10-15 km pipeline segments to meet the submission requirements. This has resulted in multiple PLA applications being filed for the proposed 600 km ROW. Under current legislation, the AER is required to provide a public notice of application (**PNoA**) for each application they receive. As a result, the AER issued a corresponding PNoA for each PLA application filed providing Indigenous groups and interested parties the opportunity to file a statement of concern (**SOC**) for each individual segment of the ROW.

The AER has confirmed on two occasions (May 27, 2024 and April 28, 2025) that all applications are available for review, and based on concerns received from multiple Indigenous groups, there will be flexibility for the Nations on how they may file SOCs to the AER in relation to the overall CO₂ Transportation Network (i.e. application-by-application or in a consolidated format for the entire network) and for other components of the Pathways Project. Canadian Natural also promptly shares applications with the Nations upon the AER’s receipt and assignment of application number, including the deadline for filing a SOC for each application. This ensures that Indigenous groups are informed each time an application is filed with the AER while also ensuring that a SOC deadline is not inadvertently overlooked.

Additionally, engineering and design for the actual pipeline required for the CO₂ Transportation Network is continuing to be optimised as adjustments are made to both the proposed ROW and the pipeline to reflect feedback received from Indigenous groups and other stakeholders.

Further, the necessary *Directive 056 Energy Development Applications and Schedules (Directive 056)* for pipeline licences have yet to be prepared for submission to the AER and shared with Indigenous groups. Canadian Natural is preparing Directive 056 applications for a 30" main Transportation line which would be the largest potential diameter and basis for the Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network. The filing of the Directive 056 pipeline license applications and the remaining PLA applications are targeted by year end 2025 or early in 2026. Provincial consultation and engagement processes will continue following the filing of these remaining applications for the CO₂ Transportation Network.

Pathways CO₂ Storage Hub

Since our March 4, 2025 response to the Nations, the status of the Pathways Carbon Sequestration Agreement (the **CSA**) for the CO₂ Storage Hub is unchanged as the CSA has not been issued.

In accordance with the legislative and regulatory requirements, sequestration of CO₂ cannot commence without: (i) a CSA issued by the Government of Alberta, (ii) AER approval for a CO₂ sequestration scheme under *Directive 065 Resources Applications for Oil and Gas Reservoirs (Directive 065)*, and thereafter, (iii) applicable specific operational permits and authorizations from the AER.

Without a final, issued CSA, Canadian Natural is unable to prepare and finalize its Directive 065 submission to the AER. It is essential that Canadian Natural's Directive 065 application demonstrates to the AER that the proposed sequestration scheme complies with the requirements of Directive 065, and all applicable requirements.

Following the correct sequence of the provincial regulatory processes prior to responding to the Agency's information request is necessary to ensure that Canadian Natural is providing the Agency with information that: (a) is consistent with the applications filed with the AER; and (b) accurately reflects the details of the Pathways Project being applied for and how the specific regulatory requirements will be met. This also ensures that all parties (provincial regulatory authorities, the Agency, Indigenous groups and other stakeholders) receive the same foundational information regarding the technical details of the Project.

Awaiting the issuance of the CSA or subsequent regulatory filings to provincial authorities does not affect IAAC's independence or their purview on matters within federal jurisdiction, nor does it preclude engagement with Indigenous groups in relation to the proposed Pathways Storage Hub. The Nations will continue to receive all applications and as per the requirements under the *Responsible Development Energy Act (REDA)* with the opportunity to file SOC's to express concerns in relation to the sequestration scheme directly to the AER and Canadian Natural.

Your letter also raises concerns with respect to potential impacts to reserve lands, including but not limited to the subsurface of your reserves. Canadian Natural intends to propose sufficient buffers in the Directive 065 application to minimize the potential for CO₂ migration below reserve lands.

Further, Canadian Natural recognizes that the Nations may wish to pursue access to pore space below their reserve lands. The proposed Pathways Project is not anticipated to hinder those opportunities. It is our understanding that interested First Nations would need to initiate independent and dedicated regulatory processes that would be administered by federal agencies and departments.

Canadian Natural trusts that this response assures the Nations that a substantial amount of work is still ahead for the Project, including a continuation of Indigenous consultation and engagement processes, prior to any regulatory decisions being made and before a meaningful response can be prepared and submitted to IAAC.

Approach to the Provincial Regulatory Process and Filings

Piecemeal Approach to Provincial Regulatory Process

The Nations have reiterated their concerns that Project applications are being filed in a piecemeal manner and that the proponent refuses to consolidate the regulatory consideration of the Project components. Canadian Natural has clarified for the Nations on several occasions that there are multiple legislative and regulatory enactments that apply to the Pathways Project. Based on the scope of the Project, applications under multiple enactments are prepared and filed with the AER to ensure a comprehensive regulatory review is undertaken by the appropriate subject matter experts to confirm that specific technical and regulatory requirements are being fulfilled and if necessary, gaps are being addressed by the proponent. Similar to other pipeline projects entirely within provincial boundaries that are administered by the AER, the Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network regulatory process is driven by its linear nature and extent (i.e. over 600 km) requiring multiple regulatory applications to be prepared and filed for defined segments. This allows the AER to systematically evaluate each segment against regulatory and legislative requirements, applicable regional land use plans and/or location specific conditions. Likewise, the PLA applications for each segment are also shared with all Indigenous groups that Canadian Natural is engaging and consulting. The Nations then have the flexibility and opportunity to review each segment of the ROW, or they can choose to focus their review on select segments that are of most interest based on factors such as location, environmental features and/or traditional use sites.

To complement the regulatory applications and to assist the Nations' understanding of the overall Project, Canadian Natural has prepared and shared materials such as the Project Overview (August 2023 and updated version August 2025). Further, although not a regulatory requirement, Canadian Natural also prepared an Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) for majority of the CO₂ Transportation Network that is within the Green Area of the province, so interested Indigenous groups and other parties could review the applicable plans and proposed mitigations measures within a single document.

Consideration of Environmental Issues and Treaty Rights

In your letter, the Nations state that the assessment of the whole Project is necessary and further delay regarding the Designation Request will increase the risk of cumulative impacts on the environment, and the exercise of treaty rights not being considered in any process, regulatory or otherwise. We understand that the process for the Designation Request involves the submission of information from a proponent, as well as all the parties that the Agency has contacted to seek input, including regulatory authorities, government departments, and Indigenous groups. Upon receipt of all information, the Agency will prepare a recommendation for consideration by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada prior to issuing a decision if the Pathways Project should be designated under the Act. Accordingly, the current suspension of such a process will not result in a failure to consider adverse impacts to the environment or impacts on the exercise of treaty rights; meaningful and informed input from all parties will ensure that these concerns are properly addressed by the IAAC at the appropriate time.

Canadian Natural also notes that these issues are also being addressed within Alberta's regulatory process. The AER's mandate includes managing public lands in alignment with regional land use frameworks, protecting the environment and public safety, considering the Indigenous consultation process administered by the Aboriginal Consultation Office (ACO), and determining if an approval of a proposed activity may directly and adversely impact

the exercise of treaty rights and traditional uses. These aspects of the regulatory process are intended to address and reduce potential impacts arising from the Project on the environment and the exercise of treaty rights.

Further, under REDA, the AER is required to act in accordance with any applicable regional plans under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA)*. These regional plans include environmental management frameworks developed by the Government of Alberta for identifying and managing regional cumulative effects associated with development activities, including the development of the Pathways Project. For example, in the oil sands region, Project activities will be reviewed relative to the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (**LARP**). Additionally, in the oil sands region in particular, the Oil Sand Monitoring (**OSM**) Program administered by the governments of Canada and Alberta is intended to provide comprehensive environmental monitoring data and information to improve understanding of the long-term cumulative effects of oil sands development with input and participation by interested Indigenous groups.

Recent and Anticipated Activities for Q4 2025

Traditional Use

Canadian Natural is continuing to consult and engage with the Nations and other Indigenous groups on the Pathways Project, at present, primarily in relation to the routing proposed for the Pathways CO₂ Transportation Network in alignment with the scope of the PLA applications that have been filed to date. Through the implementation of agreed to workplans, Indigenous groups have been preparing Traditional Land Use (**TLU**)/Indigenous Knowledge (**IK**) information to share with Canadian Natural to inform Pathways Project planning. Earlier this year, we received TLU/IK from both WLFN and FLFN and currently awaiting information from BLCN.

Canadian Natural is systematically reviewing the TLU/IK information received to date to firstly clarify concerns, and to ensure that any site-specific spatial data that is needed for culturally important sites is requested and provided by Indigenous groups to prevent sites from being inadvertently overlooked in the absence of key spatial data. Through the engagement and consultation process, Canadian Natural will either respond to the concerns identified in the TLU/IK information or jointly develop suitable mitigation measures to reduce the potential impacts on the exercise of treaty rights, traditional use activities where required.

Information Sessions November 2025

In early November, Canadian Natural hosted in-person Pathways Project information sessions in three separate locations including Fort McMurray, Lac La Biche and Bonnyville, to provide the opportunity for Indigenous community representatives and members to learn more about the Pathways Project. These information sessions were specifically designed to provide a forum for members of various Indigenous groups to interact directly with Pathways Project team members and subject matter experts. As a result, the sessions were closed to the public to provide a favourable environment for Indigenous community members that would foster open dialogue and that was conducive to asking questions.

The invitations for these information sessions were distributed to the 25 Indigenous groups Canadian Natural is engaging and consulting with on the Pathways Project, including the Nations.

Newsletter

Canadian Natural prepared and issued a Project Newsletter in October that included an update on the items covered in this letter for all the Indigenous groups it is consulting and engaging with on the Pathways Project.

Closing

Canadian Natural trusts the information provided in this response is helpful to both the Nations and the Agency regarding the current suspension of the designation process in relation to the status of the Pathways Project.

Sincerely,

CANADIAN NATURAL RESOURCES LIMITED

<Original signed by>

Bill Clapperton
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Canadian Natural Resources Limited

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