
Assembly of First Nations

50 O'Connor Street, Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L2
Telephone: (613) 241-6789 Fax: (613) 241-5808
www.afn.ca



Assemblée des Premières Nations

50, rue O'Connor, Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L2
Téléphone: (613) 241-6789 Télécopieur: (613) 241-5808
www.afn.ca

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
September 3-4-5, 2025, Winnipeg, MB

Resolution no. 24/2025

TITLE: Support for First Nations' Advocacy Related to the Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Project

SUBJECT: Environment, Lands, Water, Fisheries

MOVED BY: Chief Kirby Constant, James Smith Cree Nation, SK

SECONDED BY: Chief Darcy Desjarlais, Fishing Lake First Nation, SK

DECISION Approved by the AFN Executive Committee by consensus

WHEREAS:

- A. In March 2024, the Government of Saskatchewan publicly announced and committed to the multi-phase Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Project (LDIP), projected to cost over \$4 billion and extract over 850 million cubic metres of water annually, with Phase 1 commencing in 2025.
- B. The Government of Saskatchewan is the project applicant, proponent, and the provincial regulator of the LDIP through the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency (WSA), the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Highways.
- C. First Nations of Treaty 2, 4, 5 & 6 continue to argue that the LDIP is one project, but the Government of Saskatchewan has split the project into three (3) phases, thereby attempting to minimize perception of the cumulative impacts of all three phases.
- D. To date, there has not been any federal or provincial environmental or impact assessments conducted for the LDIP, nor has there been meaningful consultation with First Nations whose rights, lands, waters, species and ways of life will be impacted.
- E. In June 2021, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) issued correspondence to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) requesting that the entirety of the project be designated a "project" under the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) and thus be subject to a federal impact assessment, to which FSIN received a response from (IAAC) indicating that phases 1 and 2 do not meet the criteria but phase 3 includes physical activities prescribed under the federal *Physical Activities Regulations*.

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 5th day of November, 2025 in Ottawa, Ontario

Cindy Woodhouse

CINDY WOODHOUSE NEPINAK, NATIONAL CHIEF

24 – 2025
Page 1 of 2

- F. First Nations and FSIN continue to advocate for the federal designation of the entire project to be deemed a “project” to ensure a comprehensive impact assessment is conducted prior to approval and construction of LDIP.
- G. The federal IAA amendments of June 2024 compel a new analysis and review of the LDIP application in addition to review of the IAA regulations and policies, and Government of Saskatchewan regulations and policies applicable to the current LDIP application, including the *Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment Act*.
- H. The Government of Saskatchewan has advanced the LDIP beyond the conceptual stage and has been provided written notice by First Nations of potential impacts and infringements to the exercise of our Inherent and Treaty Rights, requiring the Crown to engage in meaningful consultation with First Nations.
- I. Despite the issuance of formal requests, the Government of Saskatchewan has not directly issued disclosure of project application, permits, timelines or relevant information or documents to First Nations regarding the project.
- J. This project may significantly impact at least 10 of the 14 watershed systems in Saskatchewan across Treaties 2, 4, 5, and 6, and poses potential risks to water security, Treaty Land Entitlement negotiations, biodiversity, sacred sites, and the health of major river systems, including the Saskatchewan River Delta and the Qu'Appelle River.
- K. There remain serious concerns about the cumulative impacts of water extraction and land use under climate change scenarios, and the province has not demonstrated transparency in its analysis of these risks.
- L. FSIN Chiefs-in-Assembly adopted Resolution #2220 calling for a legal review, technical engagement, and federal designation of the entire project under the IAA.
- M. First Nations continue to raise concerns about the lack of capacity supports, nation-specific engagement, and operational clarity in WSA's approach to consultation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Call on the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to advocate with the Privy Council Office, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and other relevant federal Ministers to provide capacity funding to ensure each potentially impacted First Nation can meaningfully participate in consultation processes. This includes supporting First Nation-led environmental and/or impact assessments, recognition of traditional knowledge, participation in water quality and ecosystem monitoring, and the implementation of Inherent and Treaty Rights and jurisdiction.
2. Direct the AFN to support the continued coordination among impacted First Nations across Saskatchewan and Manitoba, with particular attention to Treaty Land Entitlement land selections and Addition to Reserve processes.
3. Direct the AFN to call on the Government of Saskatchewan and its Water Security Agency, as proponents of the Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Project, ensure that all decisions fully involve and are informed by impacted First Nations.

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 5th day of November, 2025 in Ottawa, Ontario

Cindy Woodhouse

CINDY WOODHOUSE NEPINAK, NATIONAL CHIEF

24 – 2025
Page 2 of 2