

In the Matter of

Request for Review of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan
Pursuant to s. 19.2 of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*
Submitted by the **Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation**

June 25, 2014

**Response Submissions
of the Government of Alberta**

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (the Applicant) has requested a review and amendment of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) in its entirety, with specific provisions outlined in Part 1 of its submissions, under section 19.2 of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA).
2. Pursuant to ALSA, the Stewardship Minister has found the application to be complete in form and has forwarded the application to the Review Panel.
3. The Government of Alberta (Alberta or Crown) submits the following in response to the Applicant's review request.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4. Alberta submits that the majority of the concerns expressed by the Applicant are outside the jurisdiction of the Panel as the concerns are not with the content of LARP but relate to:
 - Determinations of questions of constitutional law;
 - Adequacy of consultation leading up to the enactment of LARP or for LARP implementation;
 - The creation process of LARP;
 - Allegations of harms related to pre-existing development activities;
 - Allegations of harms related to potential future development activities;
 - Allegations of harms related to the implementation of LARP;
 - Items or features alleged to be missing from the content of LARP; and
 - Allegations of harms related to legislation other than LARP.
5. Some of the Applicant's concerns are within the jurisdiction of the Panel as they relate to the content of LARP. However, the provisions of LARP pointed to by the Applicant do not cause any harm to the Applicant; instead, the LARP content enhances the existing regulatory regimes and does not take away from any existing rights and uses.
6. The Applicant's dissatisfaction with the overall balancing of the competing interests in LARP is not sufficient to trigger the Panel's role in recommending specific amendments to the Minister.
7. Alberta does not necessarily agree with any or all of the Applicant's characterization of its members' rights, activities and land use. For the purposes of this response, whatever that characterization may be, Alberta submits that the Applicant has not shown that there is any existing or future harm to income, property, health or quiet enjoyment of property caused by a provision of LARP so as to trigger the Panel's power to provide recommendations for amendment to the Minister.
8. Therefore, Alberta requests that the Panel report to the Minister, pursuant to Rules 36-37,¹ that the Applicant is not directly and adversely affected.

¹ Alberta Land Stewardship Act – Rules of Practice for Conducting Reviews of Regional Plans (March 2014) [Panel Rules], Rule 36-37 – **Authorities Tab 1**

REGULATORY CONTEXT OF LARP

LARP Balances Interests

9. ALSA's purpose is:

(a) to provide a means by which the Government can give direction and provide leadership in identifying the objectives of the Province of Alberta, including economic, environmental and social objectives;

(b) to provide a means to plan for the future, recognizing the need to manage activity to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of current and future generations of Albertans, including aboriginal peoples;

(c) to provide for the co-ordination of decisions by decision-makers concerning land, species, human settlement, natural resources and the environment;

(d) to create legislation and policy that enable sustainable development by taking account of and responding to the cumulative effect of human endeavour and other events.²

10. ALSA authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish integrated planning regions, such as the Lower Athabasca Region, and a regional plan for the region following public consultation.³ The regional plan must describe the vision and objectives for the region and may, amongst other things, include policies, set thresholds, specify indicators, describe monitoring, and describe the measures to be taken to achieve the objectives and policies.⁴

11. The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) is a regional plan established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council pursuant to ALSA.

12. In keeping with ALSA's overarching purpose and its requirements for regional plans, LARP establishes a framework in which to balance competing interests on the landscape of economic opportunities, social considerations, and environmental considerations within the Lower Athabasca Region.⁵ More specifically, LARP:

- Establishes a long-term vision for the region;
- Aligns provincial policies at the regional level to balance Alberta's economic, environmental and social goals;
- Reflects ongoing commitment to engage Albertans, including aboriginal peoples, and land-use planning;
- Uses a cumulative effects management approach to balance economic development opportunities and social and environmental considerations;
- Set desired economic, environmental and social outcomes and objectives for the region;

² *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*, S.A. 2009, c. A-26.8, s. 1(2) – **Authorities Tab 2**

³ ALSA, ss. 3(1), 4(1) and 5

⁴ ALSA, ss. 8(1) and 8(2)

⁵ Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 2012-2022, OC 268/2012, (2012) Alberta Gazette 2012, Part I, pg. 1049 (ISBN No. 978-1-4601-053705 (Printed version) and ISBN No. 978-1-4601-0538-2 (Online version)) [LARP], pg. 2 – Purpose

- Describes strategies, actions, approaches and tools required to achieve the desired outcomes and objectives;
 - Establishes monitoring, evaluation and reporting commitments to assess progress; and
 - Provides guidance to provincial and local decision-makers regarding land-use management for the region.⁶
13. LARP does not give priority to any one of economic, environmental or social considerations.
14. LARP itself has four main parts:
- Introduction – which includes the overall purpose of LARP and how LARP is intended to inform land-use decisions;
 - Strategic Plan – which sets out the vision for the future of the Lower Athabasca Region and outlines a set of strategic directions which will assist in realizing the vision and desired outcomes;
 - Implementation Plan – which includes more specific regional objectives, strategies and actions to support realization of the regional vision, and includes indicators so that progress towards this vision can be measured and evaluated;
 - Regulatory Details Plan- which introduces regulatory requirements to enable the achievement of the strategic direction and associated actions.
15. LARP also establishes a number of Management Frameworks for the Lower Athabasca Region for important environmental considerations including air quality and surface water quality. LARP and the Management Frameworks identify indicators and triggers and limits for those indicators.⁷
16. LARP also expressly contemplates the creation of additional frameworks, including those relating to groundwater management, surface water quantity, and biodiversity management. These additional frameworks and other initiatives to fully implement the terms of LARP continue to be developed.
17. LARP is the culmination of years of work by the Government of Alberta as well as specific consultation and engagement with a Regional Advisory Council, First Nations and Metis organizations, municipalities, environmental groups, industry stakeholders and members of the public.⁸

⁶ LARP, pg. 2

⁷ LARP, pgs.73-76; Lower Athabasca Region Air Quality Management Framework for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), printed August 2012, ISBN978-1-4601-0532-0 (Online Version), available on the website http://environment.alberta.ca/documents/LARP_Framework_AirQuality_FINAL.pdf [Air Quality Management Framework], pgs. 19 and 26 – **Authorities Tab 3**; and Lower Athabasca Region Surface Water Quality Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca River, August 2012, ISBN No. 978-1-4601-0530-6 (Online Version), available on the website, http://environment.alberta.ca/documents/LARP_Framework_SurfaceWaterQuality_FINAL.pdf [Surface Water Quality Management Framework] pg. 17 – **Authorities Tab 4**

⁸ LARP, pg. 2

LARP Does not Take Away From the Existing Regulatory Regimes

18. LARP does not replace or take away from the existing regulatory regimes. For any activity on the landscape within the Lower Athabasca Region, LARP simply adds a layer to the existing regulatory structure.
19. LARP does not authorize any particular development or activity.
20. A proponent for any activity is still required to go through the provincial regulatory process, including receiving the necessary regulatory authorizations under legislation, prior to commencing any activity. This legislation includes, but is not limited to, the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* (EPEA), the *Water Act*, the *Public Lands Act*, the *Historical Resources Act* and the *Forests Act*.
21. As an example, under EPEA, a proponent for a proposed activity may have to conduct an environmental assessment and prepare an environmental impact assessment report if the activity is listed as a mandatory activity in regulation or is otherwise referred to the assessment process.⁹ The environmental impact assessment report must contain the information outlined in the terms of reference issued for the particular report and must also include:
 - (a) a description of the proposed activity and an analysis of the need for the activity;
 - (b) an analysis of the site selection procedure for the proposed activity, including a statement of the reasons why the proposed site was chosen and a consideration of alternative sites;
 - (c) an identification of existing baseline environmental conditions and areas of major concern that should be considered;
 - (d) a description of potential positive and negative environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts of the proposed activity, including cumulative, regional, temporal and spatial considerations;
 - (e) an analysis of the significance of the potential impacts identified under clause (d);
 - (f) the plans that have been or will be developed to mitigate the potential negative impacts identified under clause (d);
 - (g) an identification of issues related to human health that should be considered;
 - (h) a consideration of the alternatives to the proposed activity, including the alternative of not proceeding with the proposed activity;
 - (i) the plans that have been or will be developed to monitor environmental impacts that are predicted to occur and the plans that have been or will be developed to monitor proposed mitigation measures;

⁹ *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, R.S.A. 2000, c. E-12 [EPEA], ss. 44-45 – **Authorities Tab 5**

- (j) the contingency plans that have been or will be developed in order to respond to unpredicted negative impacts;
- (k) the plans that have been or will be developed for waste minimization and recycling;
- (l) the manner in which the proponent intends to implement a program of public consultation in respect of the undertaking of the proposed activity and to present the results of that program;
- (m) the plans that have been or will be developed to minimize the production or the release into the environment of substances that may have an adverse effect;
- (n) the final terms of reference; and
- (o) any other information that the Director considers necessary to assess the proposed activity.¹⁰
22. This report must be published and made publicly available.¹¹
23. Once the Director determines that the environmental impact assessment report is complete, depending on the activity, the Director advises the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER), the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB), the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) or the Minister (Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development)(ESRD) that the report is complete.¹²
24. The proponent will then be in a position to apply for the specific authorizations required for the activity in question from the AER, NRCB, AUC or ESRD (or some combination of these entities) as necessary.
25. Each of these entities has an application process and a review process which requires the proponent to submit additional information specific to the regulatory process and the activity in question which the decision-maker must consider. Each of these processes allows for some form of public participation in the review process. Forms of public participation include statements of concern by affected members of the public, appeal rights, or a public hearing.
26. Once one of these entities issues an authorization under the applicable legislation, the holder of the authorization, such as the holder of an approval issued under EPEA, must continue to comply with the terms and conditions of the authorization. These requirements are not replaced by LARP.
27. LARP then is an additional consideration which must be taken into account by the decision-maker in determining whether to authorize the applied for activity. In other words, after assessing all the other information provided by the public and by the proponent, the decision-maker must also assess whether the activity is consistent with LARP before deciding whether to

¹⁰ EPEA (Tab 5), s. 49

¹¹ EPEA (Tab 5), s. 50

¹² EPEA (Tab 5), s. 53

allow the activity. LARP also adds the requirement for Alberta to initiate management responses in accordance with the management frameworks should a trigger or limit be exceeded.¹³

LARP Does Not Take Away From the Crown's Duty and Policy Commitments to Consult

28. LARP does not take away the Crown's existing duty and policy commitment to consult with aboriginal peoples when government decisions may adversely affect their exercise of constitutionally protected rights.¹⁴
29. In addition to the regulatory application process, the Crown continues to meet any applicable duty or policy commitment to consult with aboriginal peoples (such as First Nations), including those arising from section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.
30. LARP cannot and does not change Canada's Constitution. Treaty rights and their constitutional protection exist regardless of what Alberta legislates.
31. Further, all regulatory decision-makers must ensure that their decision-making complies with Canada's Constitution, which includes recognition of treaty rights. Under LARP, the Applicant's ability to raise concerns with project-specific regulatory decision-makers about the impacts of specific projects on treaty rights remains intact.

ROLE OF REVIEW PANEL

Panel is Limited to Determinations of Direct and Adverse Effect Related to the Content of LARP

32. The Panel is created by statute and therefore is limited in its jurisdiction to the powers granted to it under its enabling legislation.
33. Section 19.2 of ALSA provides:
 - (1) A person who is directly and adversely affected by a regional plan or an amendment to a regional plan may, within 12 months from the date the regional plan or amendment affecting the person comes into force, request a review of the regional plan or amendment affecting the person in accordance with the regulations.
 - (2) On receiving a request under subsection (1), the Stewardship Minister must establish a panel to conduct a review of the regional plan or amendment and report the results of the review and any recommendations to the Stewardship Minister.¹⁵
34. Section 5(1)(c) of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Regulation* defines "directly and adversely affected" in respect of a person with regard to a regional plan, as meaning "that there is a reasonable probability that a person's health, property, income or quiet enjoyment of property, or some combination of them, is being or will be more than minimally harmed by the regional plan".¹⁶

¹³ LARP, Regulatory Details, ss. 26 and 33

¹⁴ LARP, pgs. 5, 34, 40, 63, 69

¹⁵ ALSA (Tab 2), s. 19.2(1) and (2)

¹⁶ *Alberta Land Stewardship Regulation*, AR 179/2011 [ALS Reg.], s. 5(1)(c) – **Authorities Tab 6**

35. Section 7(1) of the Regulation indicates the required contents of an application for review which includes:
- Identification of specific provisions of the regional plan which the applicant believes is or will directly and adversely affect the applicant;¹⁷
 - An explanation of how each of the above indicated specific provisions is or will directly and adversely affect the applicant;¹⁸
 - An explanation of the adverse effects suffered or expected to be suffered as a result of the above indicated specific provisions;¹⁹ and
 - The relief requested which may include an amendment to the above indicated specific provisions that the applicant proposes to diminish or eliminate the adverse effects.²⁰
36. Rule 36 of the Rules of Practice for Conducting Reviews of Regional Plans provides that the Panel must provide advice on whether the applicant is directly and adversely affected by “a specific provision or provisions in a regional plan”.²¹
37. If the Panel’s advice is that the applicant is directly and adversely affected, the Panel must in its report to the Minister:
- a) Identify and explain how the specific provision or provisions in the regional plan or in an amendment to a regional plan directly and adversely affects the applicant, and
 - b) Explain the adverse effects with respect to health, property, income or quiet enjoyment of property, or some combination of them, that the applicant is suffering or expects to suffer as a result of the specific provision(s) identified.²²
38. The effect of these provisions is that the Panel is limited in its jurisdiction to reporting to the Minister as to existing or future harms to health, property, income or quiet enjoyment of property, caused by the content of specific, identified provisions of LARP. The Panel does not have the jurisdiction to conduct a review of LARP in its entirety. The role of the Panel is not to again balance the competing economic, social and environmental considerations in the entire Lower Athabasca Region.
39. The Panel does not then have the jurisdiction to consider matters such as:
- The creation process of LARP, including concerns related to consultation;
 - Allegations of harms related to pre-existing development activities;
 - Allegations of harms related to future development activities;
 - Concerns related to the implementation of LARP;

¹⁷ ALS Reg. (Tab 6), s. 7(1)(d)

¹⁸ ALS Reg. (Tab 6), s. 7(1)(e)

¹⁹ ALS Reg. (Tab 6), s. 7(1)(f)

²⁰ ALS Reg. (Tab 6), s. 7(1)(g)

²¹ Panel Rules (Tab 1), Rule 36 a)

²² Panel Rules (Tab 1), Rule 38.

- Items or features alleged to be missing from the content of LARP; and
 - Allegations of harms related to legislation other than LARP.
40. The Panel also does not have jurisdiction to consider any questions of constitutional law, which would include alleged infringements of aboriginal or treaty rights, or alleged breaches of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.²³

“Directly and Adversely Affected” – General Causation Principles Apply

41. As set out above, the Panel’s role is confined to identifying specific provisions of LARP, if any, that directly and adversely affect the Applicant. There must be a direct causative link between LARP content and the harm alleged.
42. The Supreme Court of Canada recently discussed causation of adverse impacts on aboriginal or treaty rights in *Rio Tinto Alcan v. Carrier Sekani Tribal Council (Carrier Sekani)*.²⁴ The alleged harm must be caused by the government action complained of. In particular, past harms cannot be said to be caused by the current government action. Furthermore, the harm must be more than speculative to count as an adverse effect. The Court stated:

... The claimant must show a causal relationship between the proposed government conduct or decision and a potential for adverse impacts on pending Aboriginal claims or rights. Past wrongs, including previous breaches of the duty to consult, do not suffice.

... Mere speculative impacts, however, will not suffice. ..., there must an “appreciable adverse effect on the First Nations’ ability to exercise their aboriginal right”. The adverse effect must be on the future exercise of the right itself; ...²⁵

43. While *Carrier Sekani* was about the Crown’s duty to consult regarding potential adverse impacts on aboriginal rights in the absence of a treaty, the general principles of causation are relevant to the issue of whether the Applicant is or will be harmed by LARP content.
44. The Applicant’s dissatisfaction with LARP content, and a desire for revisions and additions, is not a sufficient trigger for the Panel’s power to recommend relief. Just because LARP might not include what the Applicant would like LARP to have included does not mean that LARP harms or will harm the Applicant.
45. The Applicant may suggest that the definition of “directly and adversely affected” set out in the *Alberta Land Stewardship Regulation* should be given a special interpretation on the basis that the Applicant’s members are an aboriginal people. However, that suggestion is contrary to case law. While there is a principle suggesting that “statutes relating to Indians should be liberally construed”, this principle applies only to interpreting Indian-specific federal legislation, and does

²³ *Constitution Act, 1982*, R.S.C. 1985, App. II, No. 44, Sched. B, Pt. II, s. 35 – **Authorities Tab 7**; *Administrative Procedures and Jurisdiction Act*, R.S.A. 2000, c. A-3 [APJA], ss. 10, 11 and 16 – **Authorities Tab 8**.

²⁴ *Rio Tinto Alcan Inc. v. Carrier Sekani Tribal Council*, 2010 SCC 43 [*Carrier Sekani*] – **Authorities Tab 9**

²⁵ *Carrier Sekani* (Tab 9) at paras. 45 and 46

not apply to provincial legislation of general application.²⁶ ALSA and the associated Regulation are provincial legislation of general application. Therefore, an ordinary and factual-based interpretation of “directly and adversely affected” is appropriate.

CONCERNS OF THE APPLICANT

46. Broadly, the concerns expressed by the Applicant are as follows:

- LARP does not include nor protect the Applicant’s treaty and aboriginal rights, traditional land uses, or culture;
- LARP does not include consideration of nor does it address how the Applicant’s members can continue to access and peacefully use and occupy reserve lands;
- LARP is being applied by decision-makers and relied upon by oil sands companies to preclude the protection of aboriginal and treaty rights and traditional land uses; and
- LARP is being applied by decision-makers to effectively rule out the possibility of establishing areas that can be set aside for traditional land use and the exercise of treaty rights.

47. The Applicant requests a review of, and amendment to, LARP in its entirety so as to be consistent with the Applicant’s view of the exercise of its members’ treaty and aboriginal rights and traditional land use in perpetuity.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE PANEL’S JURISDICTION

48. Alberta submits that the Panel does not have the jurisdiction to consider the majority of the issues raised by the Applicant because:

- the harms alleged raise questions of constitutional law;
- the harms alleged relate to alleged inadequacy of consultation during LARP creation or LARP implementation;
- the harms alleged relate to the creation process of LARP, not to the content of LARP;
- the harms alleged relate to pre-existing activities;
- the harms alleged relate to potential future activities;
- the harms alleged relate to implementation of LARP, not its content;
- the harms alleged relate to purported omissions from LARP, not the content of LARP; and
- the harms alleged relate to legislation other than LARP.

²⁶ *Wasauksing First Nation v. Wasausink Lands Inc.*, 2004 CarswellOnt 936 (Ont. C.A.) at paras. 92-94 – **Authorities Tab 10**

Panel has no Jurisdiction to Determine Questions of Constitutional Law

49. The *Administrative Procedures and Jurisdiction Act* (APJA) indicates that no decision-maker has jurisdiction to determine a question of constitutional law (which includes a determination of any right under the Constitution) unless conferred such jurisdiction by regulation.²⁷ The Panel is a “decision-maker” to which the APJA applies. While the Panel’s role pursuant to ALSA is to provide a report and recommendations to the Stewardship Minister, rather than the Panel itself rendering changes to the regional plan,²⁸ other panels who provide recommendations have been found to be “decision-makers” pursuant to APJA.²⁹
50. As a decision-maker, the Panel has not been granted jurisdiction to determine questions of constitutional law. The *Designation of Constitutional Decision Makers Regulation*, which confers jurisdiction in relation to questions of constitutional law to certain decision-makers, does not include a Panel under ALSA.³⁰
51. As the Alberta Court of Appeal noted, “the Alberta statute reflects a policy decision that the citizens of Alberta are ultimately entitled to have their constitutional rights determined by a superior court”.³¹
52. Therefore, the Panel cannot determine any question of constitutional law.
53. As a finding that LARP somehow infringes the Applicant’s members’ treaty rights or aboriginal rights would necessarily involve determining rights by applying s. 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* to LARP, this would be a “question of constitutional law” and therefore, outside the scope of the Panel’s jurisdiction.
54. In any event, Alberta would note treaty and aboriginal rights are protected by s. 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, irrespective of whether it is specifically enshrined within LARP. LARP cannot and does not purport to change Canada’s *Constitution*.

Panel has no Jurisdiction to Consider Alleged Inadequacy of Consultation During LARP Creation or During LARP Implementation

55. As noted above under the heading Role of Review Panel, the combined effect of ALSA, the Regulation and the Rules is that the Panel is limited in its jurisdiction to reporting to the Minister as to existing or future harms caused by the content of LARP. Alleged harms related to how LARP was created or harms alleged to be caused by how LARP is being, or may be, applied are not within the Panel’s jurisdiction. Therefore, it is outside of the purview of the Panel to consider the adequacy of consultation leading to the enactment of LARP or the adequacy of future consultation as it may occur under LARP.

²⁷ APJA (Tab 8), ss. 10, 11 and 16.

²⁸ ALSA (Tab 2), s. 19.2

²⁹ *Siksika First Nation v. Alberta (Director, Southern Region, Environment)*, 2007 ABCA 402, para. 10 – **Authorities Tab 11**

³⁰ *Designation of Constitutional Decision Makers Regulation*, Alta. Reg. 69/2006 – **Authorities Tab 12**

³¹ *UFCW, Local 401 v. Alberta (Information and Privacy Commissioner)*, 2012 ABCA 130, para. 43 – **Authorities Tab**

56. Alberta submits that the following issues raised by the Applicant are related to adequacy of past or future consultation and cannot be considered by the Panel:

- Strategic Plan, pages 23 and 69: The peripheral/token role given to aboriginal peoples in implementing sub plans under a regional plan that does not include what the Applicant considers to be its treaty and aboriginal rights, traditional land use and culture, as noted at Part A, paragraph 13 and Part C, paragraph 14 of the Applicant's submissions.
- Also in relation to Strategic Plan, page 23: The opportunity to provide information does not translate into any government commitment to take actions or require decision-makers to exercise their functions in a manner consistent with the Applicant's view of the continued ability of Aboriginal Peoples to exercise treaty and aboriginal rights, engage in traditional land use, practice their culture or to access, peacefully use and occupy their reserve lands, also as noted in Part A, paragraph 13 the Applicant's submissions.
- In relation to Strategic Plan, page 34 and 63 (outcome 7): Relegates the Applicant to the role of TEK (traditional ecological knowledge) and information provider. No commitment by Alberta to do anything with this information that is protective of the Applicant's view of its treaty rights, traditional land use and culture, as noted in Part A, paragraph 23 of the Applicant's submissions.

57. In any event, Alberta submits that it did indeed include aboriginal peoples in the LARP land-use planning processes and decisions at the strategic level during LARP creation.³² The Applicant even notes in its submissions (under Overview) that it "actively participated in the LARP process all the way from the RAC stage through to reviewing and providing comment on the draft LARP."

58. Further, LARP includes a number of explicit references to Alberta's continuing commitment to engage with and consult aboriginal peoples including the following:

- Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land-use planning is identified as a strategic direction that will improve the ability to balance economic, environmental and social outcomes in the region.³³
- In developing a biodiversity management framework and a landscape management plan, the Government of Alberta will work with First Nations to consider how First Nations' exercise of constitutionally protected rights to hunt, fish and trap for food can continue to occur within reasonable proximity of First Nations' main population centres.³⁴

³² *Response to Aboriginal Consultation on the Draft Alberta Land-Use Framework 2008*, printed September 2009, ISBN. 978-0-7785-8710-1 (Online Version), available on the Land Use Secretariat website at <https://landuse.alberta.ca/Governance/AboriginalPeoples/Pages/default.aspx> and also *Response to Aboriginal Consultation on the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan*, printed June 2013, ISBN. 978-1-4601-0456-9 (Online Version), available on the Land Use Secretariat website at <https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/Response%20to%20Aboriginal%20Consultation%20on%20the%20Lower%20Athabasca%20Regional%20Plan%20-%202013-06.pdf> – **Authorities Tab 14**

³³ LARP, pg. 24

³⁴ LARP, pg. 29

- Government will engage with First Nations and stakeholders on initiatives to designate motorized access such as identification of trails or areas when developing the regional parks plan and regional trail system plan.³⁵
- The Government of Alberta will work closely with aboriginal peoples...and other stakeholders to develop new-or enhance existing- tourism attractions, amenities, accommodations and access.³⁶
- Aboriginal culture, with its connection to the land and environment, provides a unique opportunity for engagement in land planning, conservation, recreation and tourism initiatives...As such, the Alberta government will look for opportunities to engage these communities and invite them to share their traditional ecological knowledge to inform land and natural resource planning in this region.³⁷
- The Alberta government will invite First Nations who have expressed an interest in the Richardson Backcountry to be involved in a sub-regional initiative called the First Nations - Richardson Backcountry Stewardship Initiative (or Richardson Initiative).³⁸
- In accordance with applicable government policy as it may be from time to time, the Government of Alberta will continue to consult with aboriginal peoples when government decisions may adversely affect the continued exercise of their constitutionally protected rights, and the input from such consultations continues to be considered prior to the decision.³⁹
- Outcome 7: Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land-use planning, which includes as its objective to encourage aboriginal peoples' participation in land-use planning and input to decision-making in recognition of the cultural and economic importance of land use to those aboriginal communities with constitutionally protected rights. This will provide both aboriginal communities and the Government of Alberta with a basis for better addressing current and potential land-use conflicts, in a manner supportive of aboriginal traditional uses, such as the exercise of treaty rights.⁴⁰

59. In summary, Alberta submits that the Panel does not have the jurisdiction to address the issues raised by the Applicant, as specified above, as this goes to the adequacy of the Crown's consultation with the Applicant either during the creation process of LARP or during the implementation of LARP. These issues do not flow from the content of LARP.

60. Alberta also submits that, in any event, LARP does provide for effective and meaningful engagement and consultation opportunities for the Applicant, including with respect to impacts on rights recognized under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

³⁵ LARP, pg. 30

³⁶ LARP, pg. 33

³⁷ LARP, pg. 34

³⁸ LARP, pg. 34

³⁹ LARP, pg. 34

⁴⁰ LARP, pgs. 63-64 - several specific strategies for achieving Outcome 7 are included.

Panel has no Jurisdiction to Consider Matters Related to LARP Creation

61. Similarly, it is outside of the purview of the Panel to consider other matters related to LARP creation process, as they do not relate to the content of LARP.
62. This means that the Panel cannot consider the Applicant's concern, noted at page 7 of its supplemental submissions, that LARP does not meet the Terms of Reference for LARP regarding consideration of lands under federal jurisdiction.
63. In any event, Alberta submits that federal lands were considered but under the federal-provincial division of powers, Alberta's regulatory authority over such lands is limited.⁴¹ This was specifically recognized by the Terms of Reference.⁴² These lands are also specifically acknowledged within LARP: LARP acknowledges that approximately 10% of the region includes the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, First Nations Reserves, Métis Settlements and Lake Athabasca.⁴³
64. Alberta also notes that the new Kazan and Richardson Wildland Parks are located north and south of Lake Athabasca, near the Applicant's Reserve lands.⁴⁴ Alberta submits that the inclusion of these areas within LARP recognizes the importance of continued opportunities for aboriginal traditional uses as is stated in the Terms of Reference.

Panel has no Jurisdiction over Alleged Harms from Activities Which Pre-date LARP

65. As noted above, the Panel has jurisdiction only with respect to harms alleged to be caused by the content of LARP. Harms which are alleged to have occurred due to activities which were carried on or approved prior to LARP cannot be caused by LARP and are therefore outside of the Panel's jurisdiction.
66. Alberta submits that this includes the following concerns:
 - Honouring of existing tenures including permitting access to water resources and disposal infrastructure, as noted in Part A, paragraph 22;
 - Recreational use of the area which the Applicant considers its traditional territory (including Richardson Backcountry), has already interfered with the Applicant's exercise of rights as noted in Part C, paragraph 10; and
 - The decline in the availability of traditional resources, as noted on pages 7-8 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions.
67. In any event, Alberta submits that LARP takes into account existing development impacts and works towards ameliorating continued effects of such development. Most notably, LARP sets

⁴¹ *Constitution Act, 1867*, R.S.C. 1985, App. II, No. 5, ss.91 and 92 – **Authorities Tab 17**

⁴² *Terms of Reference for Developing the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan*, 2009, available on the Land Use Secretariat website at

<https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/Terms%20of%20Reference%20for%20Developing%20the%20Lower%20Athabasca%20Regional%20Plan%20-%202009-07.pdf> at pg. 3 – **Authorities Tab 22**

⁴³ LARP, pg. 88

⁴⁴ LARP, pg. 92

aside approximately 1.5 million more hectares of land as conservation areas.⁴⁵ The reduction in land disturbance by the creation of conservation areas is expected to enhance opportunities for the exercise of treaty rights and traditional land uses.

68. With regards to the Applicant's concern that existing tenures will be honoured, with allowance for access to water resources and disposal infrastructure, LARP commits to making integrated land management between all industrial users on public land "a necessary element of doing business."⁴⁶ This integrated land management is designed to better coordinate existing industrial activities and any future activities, such as road networks and other infrastructure, to reduce the overall extent and duration of the land disturbance footprint.⁴⁷
69. With respect to existing recreational use of the area that the Applicant considers to be its traditional territory, LARP calls for additional planning for these types of uses to better manage the impact to the land.⁴⁸ For example, prior to LARP motorized recreation was generally allowed throughout the area, whereas under LARP, motorized recreation will be managed in the future to occur in designated areas.⁴⁹ First Nations, such as the Applicant will be consulted in accordance with applicable policy on these plans as they move forward.⁵⁰
70. In summary, Alberta submits that the above noted harms alleged by the Applicant are said to have occurred due to activities which pre-date LARP and are therefore outside of the Panel's jurisdiction.
71. In any event, Alberta also submits that LARP does consider existing development and works towards reducing continued effects of all development at a regional level.

Panel has no Jurisdiction to Consider Applicant's Allegations of Harms Related to Potential Future Development Activities

72. As noted above in the explanation of LARP's place in the overall regulatory structure, LARP does not authorize any particular activity or development. All future development activities remain subject to the existing regulatory process. Therefore, alleged harms related to potential future activities are not caused by LARP and are outside of the Panel's jurisdiction.
73. Alberta submits that the following concerns of the Applicant fall within this category:
 - The contemplation of future mine development in the Richardson conservation area, and development incompatible with the Applicant's view of treaty rights practice in conservation areas, as noted in Part A, paragraphs 14 and 19 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Loss of ability to exercise what the Applicant considers to be its members' treaty and aboriginal rights in preferred places by preferred means, as noted in Part C, paragraph 2 of the Applicant's submissions;

⁴⁵ LARP, pg. 84

⁴⁶ LARP, pg. 25

⁴⁷ LARP, pg. 25

⁴⁸ LARP, pgs. 32, 45, 46, 63 and 64

⁴⁹ LARP, pgs. 84 and 86

⁵⁰ LARP, pg. 63-64

- Loss of ability to engage in traditional land use and other traditional pursuits, as noted in Part C, paragraph 3 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Loss of ability to transmit traditional knowledge and culture to future generations, as noted in Part C, paragraph 4 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Loss of ability to engage in cultural activities and live in a culturally appropriate manner, as noted in Part C, paragraph 5;
 - Loss of culture, as noted in Part C, paragraph 6 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Impact to identity as Dene people, as noted in Part C, paragraph 23 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Loss of food security, as noted in Part C, paragraphs 7 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Increased risks, and perceived risks, associated with consumption of traditional foods, as noted in Part C, paragraph 8 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Health impacts linked to changes in diet from traditional to store-bought foods, as well as contamination of country foods, and change in lifestyle as traditional land use opportunities decrease, as noted in Part C, paragraph 9 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Loss of ability to utilize the Athabasca River as a navigation corridor, as noted in Part C, paragraph 15 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Loss of ability to access fishing , hunting and trapping areas due to water quantity issues, as noted in Part C, paragraph 16 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Contamination of local water, as noted in Part C, paragraph 17;
 - Further transformation of land from natural to industrial, as noted in Part C, paragraphs 19-22 and 24; and
 - Development near Poplar Point and Point Brule will exacerbate trespass, as noted on page 8 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions.
74. In any event, Alberta submits that LARP either (a) reduces the likelihood of the prospective future harm which the Applicant is concerned with or (b) has no effect on such harms. LARP overall does not increase the possibility of such potential future harms.
75. With respect to the Applicant's concern regarding the potential for future mine development in the Richardson Conservation area, Alberta submits that development is not contemplated in the Richardson Conservation Area.⁵¹ Future mine development is, however, contemplated in the adjacent Richardson PLART (public land use area for recreation and tourism).⁵² As noted in LARP, these new PLARTs were created to provide recreation and tourism opportunities, with the

⁵¹ LARP, pg. 84

⁵² LARP, pg. 87, as well as Schedule G

continuation of industrial development managed to reduce the impact on recreation and tourism features.⁵³ Previous to LARP, only a small portion (2384.5 hectares) of what is now the Richardson conservation area (now measuring 265,825 hectares) was protected from development by a protective notation registered with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. LARP protects a large amount of additional land, including within the Richardson area from future industrial development. LARP designates an additional 1.5 million more hectares of land as conservation areas.⁵⁴

76. In regards to the concerns outlined by the Applicant in Part C of its submissions, Alberta submits that treaty rights, while constitutionally recognized and affirmed, are not unlimited. Specifically, the treaty right to hunt, trap and fish for food is not site-specific; it is the activity which is protected.⁵⁵ Further, the Supreme Court of Canada has found for the exercise of treaty rights that changes in method do not change the essential character of the practice nor diminish the rights.⁵⁶ Accordingly, a First Nation's exercise of a treaty right in a manner different from that previously used does not necessarily diminish the exercise of the treaty right. Alberta submits that a changing landscape may change the exercise of treaty rights, without harming such rights.
77. In summary, Alberta submits that the above alleged harms relate to potential future activities and are outside of the Panel's jurisdiction.
78. In any event, Alberta also submits that LARP does not increase the potential for any of these alleged harms, but rather, reduces the likelihood that these harms will occur.

Panel has no Jurisdiction to Consider Allegations of Harms Related to the Implementation of LARP

79. As noted above, the Panel must consider only the harm caused by the content of LARP. Alleged harms caused by how LARP is or may be applied or interpreted by industry or regulatory decision-makers are outside the Panel's jurisdiction and cannot be considered.
80. Alberta submits that the following concerns of the Applicant are therefore, outside of the Panel's jurisdiction:
- The concern, as expressed in Part B and Part C, paragraphs 1 and 19 of the Applicant's submissions, and page 8 of the Applicant's supplemental submission, that LARP is being applied by decision-makers and relied on by oil sands companies to preclude the protection of what the Applicant considers to be its members' aboriginal rights, treaty rights and traditional land uses.
81. In any event, Alberta notes the general principle that all decision-making must comply with the requirements of legislation, including Canada's Constitution with its express recognition of aboriginal peoples' rights. In *Quebec (Attorney General) v. Canada (National Energy Board)*, the Supreme Court of Canada stated "it is obvious that the Board must exercise its decision-making

⁵³ LARP, pg. 33

⁵⁴ LARP, pg. 84

⁵⁵ *R. v. Lefthand*, 2007 ABCA 206, para. 101 and 178 – **Authorities Tab 23**

⁵⁶ *R. v. Morris*, 2006 SCC 59, paras. 30 and 33 – **Authorities Tab 21**

function, including the interpretation and application of its governing legislation, in accordance with the dictates of the Constitution, including s. 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.⁵⁷

82. LARP does not take away from the Applicant's ability to raise its concerns with these project-specific decision-makers about the impacts of projects on such constitutionally recognized rights. Concerns regarding the alleged failure of regulatory decision-makers to comply with the constitutional recognition of these rights can still be raised in the appropriate forum, which may be through the appeal or judicial review mechanism for that specific decision-maker. LARP leaves this ability intact.

Panel has no Jurisdiction in Relation to Alleged Omissions from LARP

83. As noted above, the Panel has jurisdiction only with respect to harms alleged to be caused by specific provisions of LARP. The Panel then has no ability to consider measures alleged to be missing from LARP.
84. Where LARP is silent on a particular topic, no taking away from existing rights occurs; rather, the current regulatory regime remains unchanged.⁵⁸ The Alberta Court of Appeal has indicated that maintenance of the status quo with respect to a First Nation's concerns is not an adverse impact.⁵⁹ In other words, LARP causes no harm by omitting to add a layer to the present regulatory regime with respect to certain matters.
85. Alberta submits that the Panel has no jurisdiction to consider the following concerns raised by the Applicant:
- LARP does not include a specific regulatory details plan for traditional land use and treaty rights nor does it contain other measures that are protective of what the Applicant considers to be its members' treaty and aboriginal rights, traditional land uses and culture, as noted in Part A, paragraphs 1-3, 10, 12, 17, 26-30 and 34 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - The conservation areas have not been selected nor designed nor their objectives set in a manner consistent with the Applicant's view of its members' treaty rights and traditional uses or with the Applicant's ability to access and peacefully use and occupy reserve lands, as noted in Part A, paragraphs 4, 5, 18 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - The Air Quality Management Framework triggers and limits do not include reference to the health of the Applicant's members, as noted in Part A, paragraph 6 and 31;
 - Reclamation is only required to an equivalent land capability (rather than to a state consistent with the Applicant's view of aboriginal traditional land use and the exercise of treaty rights), as noted in Part A, paragraph 16 of the Applicant's submissions;
 - Conservation areas will be managed to provide low-impact backcountry recreation opportunities and nature-based tourism products and services without any mechanism for

⁵⁷ *Quebec (Attorney General) v. Canada (National Energy Board)*, [1994] 1 S.C.R. 159 at para. 44 – **Authorities Tab 15**

⁵⁸ LARP, pg. 27

⁵⁹ *Tsuu T'ina Nation v. Alberta (Environment)*, 2010 ABCA 137, at para. 89 – **Authorities Tab 16**

consideration of the impacts such activities will have upon the Applicant, including restrictions on motorized vehicles as noted in Part A, paragraph 20 of the Applicant's submissions;

- The lack of mechanism to protect the navigation and riparian rights, as noted on page 8 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions;
- The Water Quality Framework does not address safe drinking water or other health concerns related to water quality for the Applicant's Reserves or members, as noted on page 8 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions; and
- LARP does not prevent Shell's Jackpine application or planned development case, as noted on page 9 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions.

86. In any event, in relation to the concern that LARP does not explicitly include mechanisms for managing traditional land use or access for the exercise of treaty rights, Alberta submits that it must also respect its jurisdictional limits as included in the federal-provincial division of powers within sections 91 and 92 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. Under this division of powers, Canada has exclusive legislative power over "Indians" and "Lands reserved for the Indians".⁶⁰ While provincial enactments of general application (such as LARP) apply of their own force to "Indians" and on reserves, this is subject to exceptions arising from the division of powers. The key exceptions are that LARP and other provincial enactments cannot legislate about Indian rights, the status or capacities of Indians as Indians or the Indian interest in land. Nor can such provincial enactments single out "Indians" for special treatment.⁶¹ Therefore, in legislating access to provincial Crown land, Alberta could not expressly define somebody as being or not being an "Indian" or lands as those to which "Indians" have a right of access to exercise treaty rights. To the extent that the Applicant suggests that LARP should be amended to do such things, such amendments may be unconstitutional.
87. With respect to the designation of conservation areas, Alberta submits that one of the key criteria for establishment of conservation areas were that the area support aboriginal traditional uses.⁶² These uses were considered, along with the other criteria, such as little to no industrial activity and areas that are representative of the biological diversity, in establishing the location of conservation areas.
88. More generally, LARP states that the biodiversity management framework and landscape management plan are to have several measures that will support systematic, regional management of wildlife habitat and populations and should, in turn, support the exercise of treaty rights and traditional land use.⁶³ LARP also expressly indicates that Alberta will work with First Nations in developing the biodiversity management framework, the landscape management plan, and the Lower Athabasca Regional Trail System Plan.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Constitution Act, 1867* (Tab 17)

⁶¹ *R. v. Sutherland*, [1980] 2 S.C.R. 451, para. 5 – **Authorities Tab 18**

⁶² LARP, pg. 30

⁶³ LARP, pgs. 45-46

⁶⁴ LARP, pgs. 63-65

89. Further, as noted above, LARP does not take away from the Crown's duty to consult or other policy commitments to consult with aboriginal peoples (such as First Nations) when government decisions may adversely affect the exercise of constitutionally protected rights.
90. With respect to the Air Quality Management Framework, Alberta notes that the triggers and limits within the framework are based on the Alberta Ambient Air Quality Objectives (AAAQO). The AAAQO were developed and implemented under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* (EPEA) to protect the environment and human health, while recognizing principles of sustainability that include environmental as well as technical, social and economic considerations.⁶⁵ An AAAQO is "a numerical compensation, value or narrative statement which is intended to provide protection of the environment and human health to the extent that is technically and economically feasible, and the socially and politically acceptable".⁶⁶ Therefore, human health, although not specific to the health of the Applicant's members, is one of the important bases on which these triggers and limits were set.
91. For the specific AAAQOs used in the LARP Air Quality Management Framework⁶⁷:
- The 1-hour average Alberta Ambient Air Quality Objective for nitrogen dioxide is 300 µg m-3 (159 ppb) based on respiratory effects.
 - The annual average Alberta Ambient Air Quality Objective for nitrogen dioxide is 45 µg m-3 (24 ppb) based on vegetation.
 - The 1-hour average Alberta Ambient Air Quality Objective for sulphur dioxide is 450 µg m-3 (172 ppb) based on pulmonary effects.
 - The annual average Alberta Ambient Air Quality Objective for sulphur dioxide is 20 µg m-3 (8.0 ppb) adopted from the European Union, which based its objective on the protection of ecosystems.
92. Further, LARP enhances the use of AAAQOs by establishing triggers that are below the limit for each indicator (the LARP air quality limits are the AAAQO). This allows sufficient time to plan and react to manage air quality so as to avoid reaching that limit. LARP also addresses cumulative effects by ensuring releases from various sources and at various scales are managed so that they do not collectively result in unacceptable air quality. It also contemplates the use of both regulatory and non-regulatory tools in addressing air quality concerns.⁶⁸
93. With respect to the Applicant's concerns regarding water quality, LARP and the Surface Water Quality Management Framework identify 28 indicators (11 general indicators and 27 metal indicators) and establishes triggers and limits. In selecting the limits, guidelines for each indicator were selected first from the Alberta Water Quality Guidelines for the Protection of Aquatic Life and then from the most stringent of 5 other guidelines:
- CCME Water Quality Guidelines for the Protection of Aquatic Life

⁶⁵ LARP, pg. 73; Air Quality Management Framework (Tab 3) pg. 12

⁶⁶ Air Quality Management Framework pg 12

⁶⁷ Air Quality Management Framework pg 12

⁶⁸ Air Quality Management Framework

- CCME Water Quality Guidelines for the protection of Agricultural Water Uses
 - Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality (Health Canada 2010)
 - Guidelines for Canadian Recreational Water Quality (Health and Welfare Canada 1992)
 - United States Environmental Protection Agency’s Aquatic Life Criteria.
94. Each guideline is aimed at protecting a specific aspect, such as aquatic life, human health, or recreational water quality. As with air quality, LARP enhances the use of these guidelines by establishing triggers to address issues before limits are reached.
95. In relation to the Applicant’s concern that there is “no mechanism” for consideration of the potential impacts on the Applicant of future development of backcountry recreation and nature based tourism, Alberta submits, as noted above, that LARP does not take away from the existing Crown duty or other policy commitments to consult with the Applicant. Also, as noted above, LARP expresses Alberta’s ongoing commitment to continue to engage aboriginal peoples and includes specific indication of engagement in relation to restrictions on motorized access.⁶⁹
96. Further, pending plans formally designating areas or routes, LARP specifies that “[o]ff-highway vehicle use is permitted on existing access”.⁷⁰ The rationale for restricting motorized access to designated areas is “to mitigate potential biodiversity impacts associated with random motorized access”.⁷¹ This in turn will support the exercise of traditional activities on the landscape.
97. With respect to the Applicant’s concern regarding suitable reclamation criteria, the current objective of reclamation under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and the *Public Lands Act* is “equivalent land capability”.⁷² LARP does not require reclamation to any particular standard – LARP merely outlines the existing requirement.⁷³ Omissions from LARP are outside the Panel’s jurisdiction, as is recommending amendments to legislation other than LARP.
98. In any event, such specific criteria are not appropriately dealt with at a regional level. Also, LARP does assist more generally in reclamation by contemplating the implementation of a progressive reclamation strategy which will provide mechanisms to define, measure and report on the return of lands to equivalent capability.⁷⁴
99. In summary, Alberta submits that items or measures alleged to be missing from LARP cannot be harm caused by LARP and are outside of the Panel’s jurisdiction.

⁶⁹ LARP, pg. 30

⁷⁰ LARP, pg. 30

⁷¹ LARP, pg. 30

⁷² *Conservation and Reclamation Regulation*, Alta. Reg. 115/1993, s. 1(e) and s. 2 – **Authorities Tab 24**; *Public Lands Administration Regulation*, Alta. Reg. 187/2011 [PLAR], s. 23 – **Authorities Tab 20**

⁷³ LARP, pg. 26

⁷⁴ LARP, pg. 46

100. In any event, the existing regulatory structure will continue to apply where LARP is silent with respect to a particular topic, maintaining the status quo. Alberta submits that maintenance of the status quo is not an adverse effect caused by LARP.

Panel has no Jurisdiction to Consider Harms Alleged to be Caused by Legislation Other Than LARP

101. Some of the harms alleged by the Applicant are related to legislation other than LARP.
102. As noted above, the purpose of the Panel is to review the content of LARP. The Panel has no ability to recommend amendments to any other legislative instruments. Therefore, alleged harms which are caused by legislation other than LARP are outside the Panel's jurisdiction and should not be considered.
103. Alberta submits that the following concerns fall within that category:
- Designation of public land use zones under the *Public Lands Administration Regulation* will result in restrictions on the use of conveyances, including on and off highway vehicles, snow vehicles and motorized boats, as noted on page 9 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions;
 - Designation of recreation areas and public land use zones will result in restrictions on camping and fires, as noted on page 9 of the Applicant's supplemental submission; and
 - Designation of recreation areas and public recreation trails will result in restrictions on firearms, as noted on page 9 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions.
104. These concerns are not concerns about LARP so much as about the *Provincial Parks Act*, which governs provincial parks, provincial recreation areas and wildland provincial parks, and the *Public Lands Act*, which governs public land use zones and public land recreation trails. It is these provincial laws, as they are currently enacted, which the Applicant actually takes issue with. The Applicant is also concerned with the potential for future changes to these provincial laws and regulations.
105. A review of existing provincial laws outside of LARP, such as those noted above, or recommendations to change these laws or their regulations is outside of the Panel's jurisdiction.
106. Alberta concedes that, generally, the Panel does have jurisdiction to recommend that an area designated by LARP as a conservation area, provincial recreation area or a public land area for recreation and tourism (PLART) not be designated at all or be given a different type of designation. However, the Panel's jurisdiction in this regard is limited – the Panel may only recommend an alternate designation from the existing set of designations under existing provincial legislation. The Panel cannot create new designations as it does not have authority to recommend changes to the provincial legislation governing land designations as they are outside LARP.
107. Moreover, the Applicant has not suggested that any of the conservation areas, provincial recreation areas or PLARTs designated by LARP should not have been designated at all. Nor has the Applicant suggested that a different type of designation for any of the conservation areas, provincial recreation areas or PLARTs would be more appropriate. This reinforces that the

Applicant's issues relate to the provisions under the existing provincial legislation outside of LARP and not the content of LARP.

108. Alberta submits that it is not the role of the Panel to engage in a wholesale balancing again of all of the potentially competing interests regarding the designation of a particular conservation area, provincial recreation area or PLART in the absence of a specific suggestion for an alternate designation for a specific area identified in LARP.
109. In any event, any impact to the Applicant's access to conservation areas, provincial recreation areas or PLARTs is minimal and reasonable, given that the regulation of motorized access is intended to ultimately support the Applicant's exercise of treaty rights. Establishment of the conservation areas and PLARTs will not prevent pedestrian access. However, establishment of these areas will somewhat change motorized access.
110. More specifically, much of the lands that will become conservation areas, provincial recreation areas and PLARTs are currently vacant public lands under the *Public Lands Act*. Under the *Public Lands Act* and the *Public Lands Administration Regulation*, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use is allowed on vacant public lands, except for the beds and shores of naturally occurring permanent water bodies, and is not limited to designated routes.⁷⁵
111. Once the conservation areas, provincial recreation areas and PLARTs are established, motorized access will be restricted to designated routes and areas.⁷⁶ LARP recognizes this, indicating that "Motorized Recreation on Designated Routes Only" will be allowed in each of the new conservation areas, provincial recreation areas and PLARTs.⁷⁷
112. LARP specifies that pending plans formally designating areas or routes, "[o]ff-highway vehicle use is permitted on existing access".⁷⁸ LARP specifically indicates that Alberta will engage with First Nations in the designation of such routes or areas.⁷⁹
113. The rationale for restricting motorized access to designated areas is "to mitigate potential biodiversity impacts associated with random motorized access".⁸⁰ This in turn is intended to support the exercise of traditional activities on the landscape.
114. Furthermore, the Supreme Court has found with respect to the exercise of treaty rights that "changes in method do not change the essential character of the practice".⁸¹ Accordingly, a First Nation's exercise of a treaty right in a manner different from that previously used does not necessarily diminish the exercise of the treaty right. Alberta submits that a changing landscape may change the exercise of treaty rights, without "harming" such rights.

⁷⁵ PLAR (Tab 20), ss. 32(1), 32(2)(d) and 43

⁷⁶ *Provincial Parks (General) Regulation*, s. 27(1)(a), Alta. Reg. 102/85 – **Authorities Tab 19**; PLAR (Tab 20), ss. 185(1) and (3)

⁷⁷ LARP, pgs. 84 and 86

⁷⁸ LARP, pg. 30

⁷⁹ LARP, pg. 30

⁸⁰ LARP, pg. 30

⁸¹ *R. v. Morris* (Tab 21), para. 30

115. The Applicant has also alleged restrictions on camping and fires within “recreation areas” and public land use zones. The Applicant does not state whether it is concerned with provincial recreation areas, which are established under the *Provincial Parks Act*, or public land recreation areas, which are established under the *Public Lands Act*. LARP relies on the former in designating its provincial recreation areas.⁸²
116. In response, establishment of public land use zones will not change the status quo with respect to camping or fires. Part 9 of the *Public Lands Administration Regulation* (PLAR) does not contain any provisions regarding camping or fires related to public land use zones. Although Part 9 of PLAR does contain provisions regulating camping and fires with respect to public land recreation areas, LARP does not designate any public land recreation areas. With respect to provincial recreation areas, Alberta acknowledges that, under the *Provincial Parks (General) Regulation*, permits may be required for camping in areas outside of designated areas, in large groups or for longer stays.⁸³ However, Alberta submits this is reasonable to mitigate impacts to the provincial recreation areas.
117. The Applicant has also alleged restrictions on the use of firearms within “recreation areas” and public land trails. Alberta acknowledges that the *Provincial Parks (General) Regulation* requires a permit to discharge a firearm in a provincial recreation area.⁸⁴ However, Alberta submits that this restriction is reasonable to protect users of these areas. LARP does not designate any public land trails.
118. In summary, to the extent that the Applicant’s concerns, as noted above, relate to the restrictions on certain activities contained within existing legislation other than LARP, such concerns are outside of the Panel’s jurisdiction.
119. In any event, Alberta submits that any impacts to the Applicant are reasonable and will be minimal.

ISSUES WITHIN THE PANEL’S JURISDICTION

120. The following concerns raised by the Applicant relate to the content of LARP:
- LARP prioritizes development, as noted in Part A, paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Applicant’s submissions; and
 - LARP’s designations of provincial recreation areas and public land areas for recreation and tourism (PLARTs) may result in increased recreation use of the areas, and therefore increased competition for resources, thereby impacting use of the areas by the Applicant’s members, as noted in Part C, paras 10-13 of the Applicant’s submissions.
121. However, Alberta submits that the content of LARP does not, in fact, cause the harm alleged by the Applicant.

⁸² LARP, pg. 86

⁸³ *Provincial Parks (General) Regulation* (Tab 19), ss. 35-40

⁸⁴ *Provincial Parks (General) Regulation* (Tab 19), s. 46(1.1)

LARP does not Authorize or Prioritize Development

122. The Applicant suggests that LARP prioritizes development (Part A, paragraphs 11-12, 15 of the Applicant's submissions and page 7 of the Applicant's supplemental submissions).
123. This assertion is not accurate.
124. LARP does not prioritize development. LARP "aligns provincial policies at the regional level to balance Alberta's economic, environmental and social goals".⁸⁵ LARP's vision describes "a desired future state for the Lower Athabasca in which the region's diverse economic opportunities are balanced with social and environmental considerations using a cumulative effects management approach".⁸⁶
125. LARP identifies seven regional outcomes.⁸⁷ The outcome of optimizing the economic potential of the oil sands must be weighed against the outcomes of managing landscapes to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity, managing air and water to support human and ecosystem needs, and inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land use planning. LARP does not rank the regional outcomes.
126. In summary, LARP does not prioritize development for the Lower Athabasca Region. Rather, it strives to strike a balance between social, environmental and economic outcomes, taking into account the current state of the region.

Any Effect from LARP's Designation of Recreation Areas is not Adverse

127. The Applicant argues, at Part C, paragraphs 10-13 of its submissions, that LARP's designations of provincial recreation areas and public land areas for recreation and tourism (PLARTs) may impact the Applicant's exercise of treaty rights. In particular, the Applicant alleges that designation of the provincial recreation areas and PLARTs may encourage further sport and commercial hunters and fishers as well as increasing numbers of recreational users. The Applicant cites concerns of increased competition for resources and impacts to the Applicant's ability to hunt due to safety concerns. The Applicant is also concerned that the proposed road and trail networks will increase the amount of access by recreational users.
128. Alberta submits that the Applicant will not be adversely affected.
129. The majority of the lands that will be established as provincial recreation areas or PLARTs are currently vacant public lands administered under the *Public Lands Act* and the *Public Lands Administration Regulation* (PLAR). On these vacant public lands, motorized access is not limited to designated routes and any person can enter onto and occupy this land for a recreational purpose (as defined) for up to 14 days, subject to certain exceptions.⁸⁸
130. Once established as either provincial recreation areas under the *Provincial Parks Act* or as public land use zones under the *Public Lands Act*, these areas will be subject to additional regulation.

⁸⁵ LARP, pg. 2

⁸⁶ LARP, pg. 23

⁸⁷ LARP, pg. 37

⁸⁸ PLAR (Tab 20), s. 32

For example, motorized recreation will be limited to designated routes. This regulation is intended to mitigate impacts to the lands and potential biodiversity impacts associated with random motorized access. Regulation of motorized access will increase, not detract from, safety. Hunting, with its attending safety concerns, will continue to be regulated by existing legislation.

131. Alberta submits that the increased regulation of the provincial recreation areas and PLARTs will support the exercise of traditional activities on the landscape⁸⁹ and will reduce the potential for conflict between users, including the Applicant's members, rather than increase such conflict.
132. Alberta would also note that provincial recreation areas and new PLARTS will make up only a small portion (approximately 0.55% and 0.91%)⁹⁰ of the land base in the Lower Athabasca region.

CONCLUSION

133. Alberta submits that the majority of the concerns raised by the Applicant are not related to the content of LARP and are therefore outside of the Panel's jurisdiction and must not be considered.
134. For the concerns noted above which are within the Panel's jurisdiction, as they relate to the current content of LARP, Alberta submits that no harm to the Applicant, as alleged, or at all, arises from the content of LARP complained of.
135. Alberta submits that the Applicant has not shown that there is any existing or future harm caused by a provision of LARP so as to trigger the Panel's power to provide recommendations for amendment to the Minister.
136. Consequently, Alberta requests that the Panel report to the Minister, pursuant to Rule 37, that the Applicant is not directly and adversely affected in accordance with Rule 36.

All of which is respectfully submitted June 25, 2014.

ALBERTA JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL



Per: Lisa Semenchuk, Wendy Thiessen, and Witek Gierulski
Counsel for the Government of Alberta

⁸⁹ LARP, pg. 30

⁹⁰ LARP, pgs. 86-87

Table of Authorities

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1.	Alberta Land Stewardship Act – Rules of Practice for Conducting Reviews of Regional Plans (March 2014)
2.	<i>Alberta Land Stewardship Act</i> , S.A. 2009, c. A-26.8
3.	Lower Athabasca Region Air Quality Management Framework for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO ₂)
4.	Lower Athabasca Region Surface Water Quality Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca River
5.	<i>Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act</i> , R.S.A. 2000, c. E-12
6.	<i>Alberta Land Stewardship Regulation</i> , AR 179/2011
7.	<i>Constitution Act, 1982</i> , R.S.C. 1985, App. II, No. 44, Sched. B, Pt. II
8.	<i>Administrative Procedures and Jurisdiction Act</i> , R.S.A. 2000, c. A-3
9.	<i>Rio Tinto Alcan Inc. v. Carrier Sekani Tribal Council</i> , 2010 SCC 43
10.	<i>Wasauksing First Nation v. Wasausink Lands Inc.</i> , 2004 CarswellOnt 936 (Ont. C.A.)
11.	<i>Siksika First Nation v. Alberta (Director, Southern Region, Environment)</i> , 2007 ABCA 402
12.	<i>Designation of Constitutional Decision Makers Regulation</i> , Alta. Reg. 69/2006
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15.	<i>Quebec (Attorney General) v. Canada (National Energy Board)</i> , [1994] 1 S.C.R. 159
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17.	<i>Constitution Act, 1867</i> , R.S.C. 1985, App. II, No. 5
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19.	<i>Provincial Parks (General) Regulation</i> , Alta. Reg. 102/1985
20.	<i>Public Lands Administration Regulation</i> , Alta. Reg. 187/2011
21.	<i>R. v. Morris</i> , 2006 SCC 59

22.	<i>Terms of Reference for Developing the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan, 2009</i>
23.	<i>R. v. Lefthand, 2007 ABCA 206</i>
24.	<i>Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, Alta. Reg. 115/1993</i>