Feedback Received and IESO Responses

Northwest Ontario Electricity Planning Public Webinar #1: Draft Forecast Scenarios June 11, 2026

To support the development of the Northwest Ontario Integrated Regional Resource Plan (IRRP), the IESO hosted engagements with municipalities and the public during which the IESO:

Shared an overview of the regional planning process, and the draft demand forecast scenarios for the Northwest electrical region.

The presentation materials and recorded webinar are available on the engagement webpage.

Feedback regarding the draft recommendations to address remaining needs was welcomed until July 2, 2026.

The IESO appreciates the input, which will be considered by the Technical Working Group[1] (TWG) to continue to develop the IRRP. Feedback was received regarding the draft demand forecasts, considerations for electricity planning for the region, and the proposed Engagement Plan from the following parties:

- Rainy River First Nations (RRFN)
- Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA)
- Power Workers' Union (PWU)

The sections below summarize the received feedback. Full submissions can be viewed on the engagement webpage.

[1] The Technical Working Group is led by the IESO and consists of the local distribution companies (LDCs) in the region and the local transmitter (Synergy North, Atikokan Hydro, Sioux Lookout Hydro, Hydro One (Distribution), Fort Francis Power Corporation, Hydro One (Transmission), and Wataynikaneyap Power)

Demand Forecast Scenarios and Planning Approach

Feedback/Common Themes	IESO Response
Scenario Development and Forecasting RRFN advocated for scenarios that better reflect key regional growth drivers, including Indigenous community growth, Indigenous-led economic development, critical minerals development, forestry investment, transportation infrastructure, and electrification initiatives. ORA recommended that the IESO explicitly link identified needs and draft recommendations to the scenarios that drive them. ORA recommended using probability-weighted scenarios and applying the low-growth scenario to determine the timing of system needs and investments.	The TWG developed three forecast scenarios to assess the Northwest region's needs based on station level forecasts received directly from the LDCs and the local transmitters in the region. In addition, the TWG worked directly with customers and industry stakeholders, including the Northern Ontario Municipal Association Energy Task Force, Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, and mines, to consider demand for large electricity consumers that may seek connection on the transmission system, and regional growth drivers in the mineral, forestry, transportation, and other sectors. Communities are encouraged to share emerging local growth details with their local distribution company who will share that information with the IESO through forecast updates. Stakeholders are also encouraged to submit early-stage project and site information for major projects through the IESO's Major Projects Identification Committees (MPIC) process to improve visibility into where new demand may emerge and inform electricity system plans and forecasts. Draft forecast scenarios allow for rigorous technical studies to be conducted to determine needs that would arise on the system in each case, develop a range of options, and prepare recommendations as part of the final IRRP to ensure a reliable and adequate supply of electricity to the region. Planning against different scenarios will help maintain flexibility to respond to evolving demand and policy signals, while minimizing ratepayer risks associated with overbuilding or building too early. The IESO will continue to monitor demand, connection activity, and regional developments to refine timing and sequencing of investments, based on the best available information about the timing,

Feedback/Common Themes	IESO Response
	location and certainty of new growth and development.
Flexible and Adaptive Planning ORA advocated for the use of clear signposts, staged decision points, and deferrable investment off-ramps to avoid committing to investments before forecast growth materializes. RRFN emphasized the need for flexible planning that can accommodate projects advancing faster than forecasted, ensuring electricity infrastructure does not become a barrier to economic or community development.	The IESO recognizes that evolving economic development trends may influence future electricity needs. As load growth is identified by a community, communities/customers are encouraged to share these growth details to their local distribution company that will share that information with the IESO through forecast updates. While planning recommendations are primarily driven by the reference scenario, the high and low scenarios will be considered to test the robustness of the plan, identify signposts to monitor forecast changes and contemplate additional actions required if changes in demand growth materialize. The IESO will continue to consider updated regional growth forecasts throughout the IRRP development process, and the final plan will have sufficient margin and flexibility to accommodate reasonable deviations from the forecasted load.
Transparency and Cost Impacts ORA recommended greater transparency by reporting ratepayer cost exposure under the low and reference scenarios, in addition to the high-growth scenario.	As part of the regional planning process, the IESO uses the forecast scenarios to identify needs within the system and investigates solutions to meet identified needs. During upcoming milestones, cost estimates will be developed for potential options.
Resource Adequacy and Risk Assessment ORA recommended adopting more conservative assumptions for energy-limited northern hydroelectric resources rather than crediting them at full output.	Thank you for this feedback. The IESO recognizes that the capability of hydroelectric resources can vary based on a range of factors. Consistent with its planning practices, the IESO develops forecasts and technical assessments using the best available data, established methodologies, and reasonable assumptions available at the time of the study.

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	As part of the electricity planning process, the IESO regularly reviews resource assumptions and updates planning assessments as new information becomes available. This iterative approach enables future planning studies to reflect changing system conditions while supporting reliable and cost-effective electricity planning decisions.
Climate Resilience and Reliability RRFN and ORA advocated for greater consideration of climate impacts on system planning and reliability, including climate-resilience assessments and stress-testing forecasts against multi-year drought conditions.	Thank you for this feedback. Planning for Ontario's future energy system includes some consideration of climate impacts on system planning and reliability, ensuring flexibility across the supply mix. The Technical Working Group has developed forecast scenarios based on known drivers, including climate considerations such as temperature trends, extreme weather risks, and long-term system impacts, and accounts for extreme weather adjustments based on historical data. More details about extreme weather methodology are available here. The IESO continues to evaluate how it can evolve its planning processes to manage the risks from a changing climate as noted in the IESO's 2026 – 2028 Business Plan, and welcomes appropriate inputs that can support these analyses.

Developing Solutions to Meet Regional Needs

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Transmission Expansion and Regional Infrastructure PWU and RRFN advocated for increased transmission capacity in northwest Ontario to support growing electricity demand, economic development, community growth, electrification, and system reliability.	The IESO recognizes the importance of timely transmission development to support growth and evolving electricity needs. The IESO recently completed the North-South Transmission Reinforcement Bulk Plan in September 2025, which was undertaken to assess the reliability of the bulk transmission system that connects northern and

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PWU supported major transmission investments, including a North-South double-circuit 230 kV connection to the East-West Tie, and argued that building double-circuit infrastructure upfront is more cost-effective than staged development. PWU recommended expediting transmission development in the Red Lake area outside the Transmitter Selection Framework process due to the urgent need for capacity, reliability, and economic development support.	southern Ontario. The complete report and engagements can be found here. The IESO is continuing to conduct regional and bulk planning in the North with the objectives of addressing near-term and long-term needs. In response to significant growth across the North of Dryden area, including the Red Lake region, the IESO initiated the North of Dryden Addendum outside of the regular regional planning cycle. The study identified a need for several transmission reinforcements, including the Red Lake transmission line. On April 23, 2026, the Government of Ontario designated the Red Lake transmission line as a priority project and directed Hydro One to develop and construct it. The cost estimate for this project was included in the 2025 North of Dryden Sub-Region IRRP. Competitive transmission procurements are undertaken in accordance with government policy direction. Potential projects are assessed against the proposed Transmitter Selection Framework eligibility criteria, including but not limited to urgency of need, project scope, voltage level, and project complexity and lead-time requirements.
Generation and Resource Planning PWU advocated for additional generation resources located within northwest Ontario, noting the region's reliance on distant supply and imports, and recommended maintaining Atitokan Generating Station in planning assumptions as a strategic, dispatchable, low-carbon resource. ORA recommended using more conservative supply assumptions in demand forecasts by	The IESO recently completed the North-South Transmission Reinforcement Bulk Plan in September 2025, which was undertaken to assess the reliability of the bulk transmission system that connects northern and southern Ontario. The complete report and engagements can be found here. In preparation of preliminary connection guidance for the second window and future procurement windows of the Second Long-Term Request for Proposals (LT2 RFP), the IESO will take into account the recommendations from these plans, as well as project outcomes and the IESO's experience from LT2 Window 1 to see what changes can be made to

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recognizing the limitations of energy-constrained northern hydroelectric resources.	deliverability assumptions to open up capacity in northern Ontario. With respect to considering Atitokan Generating Station in planning assumptions, as mentioned during the public webinar on June 11, the IESO's base assumptions during planning consider contract terms. If a resource's contract expires and is no longer assumed available, it would not contribute to the baseline planning case. The IESO appreciates ORA's recommendation to apply conservative supply assumptions when assessing future electricity needs. In developing the needs assessment, the analysis by the TWG was informed by established planning assumptions, including the 85th and 98th percentile hydroelectric generation profiles identified through the Ontario Resource and Transmission Assessment Criteria (ORTAC). Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3 in the North-South Transmission Reinforcement Bulk Plan provide the aggregated daily 98 percentile and 85 percentile generation profiles for resources north of the Flow North (FN) and Claireville North plus Orangeville and S2S East (CLANE) interfaces, respectively, for the winter months and summer months. These profiles reflect the variability of hydroelectric generation throughout the day and across seasons and ensures that planning decisions are based on a practical assessment of future system conditions and reliability requirements.
Non-Wires Alternatives and Investment Strategy ORA advocated for carrying forward non-wires alternatives (i.e., including wind, solar, and battery energy storage systems) for remote communities and as a means of staging or deferring transmission investments, with	Thank you for the feedback. The IESO recognizes that non-wires alternatives can play an important role in addressing electricity system needs As part of the planning process, the IESO evaluates a broad range of options to ensure Ontario's electricity system remains reliable, affordable, and sustainable. Once forecast scenarios and system needs have been established, the IESO screens and assesses both wires and non-wires options, including

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evaluation based on the IESO's Hybrid Resource Equivalency Assessment framework. PWU acknowledged a role for non-wires alternatives but emphasized that they should complement, rather than replace, major transmission investments needed to meet bulk electricity demand and long-term growth. ORA cautioned against sizing transmission infrastructure based on speculative or finite mining loads, advocating for alternative resource options to reduce stranded-asset risk and ratepayer costs.	transmission-connected generation and storage, distributed generation, demand response, and additional demand-side management programs. These options are evaluated against criteria such as reliability, cost, technical feasibility, maximizing the use of existing infrastructure where economical, and community preferences. Consistent with the recommendations to carry forward non-wires alternatives for remote communities and to assess their potential to stage or defer transmission investments perspectives, the IESO's planning process considers both wires and non-wires solutions and seeks to identify the combination of resources that best meets system needs while maintaining reliability and cost-effectiveness. With respect to concerns regarding the sizing of transmission infrastructure for uncertain or finite mining loads, the IESO recognizes the importance of balancing the need to enable economic development with the need to manage stranded-asset risk and protect ratepayer interests. Planning recommendations are informed by demand forecasts, technical studies, and evaluations of alternative solutions. The assessment of both wires and non-wires options helps ensure that needs are addressed using the most appropriate and cost-effective approach based on the timing, magnitude, and location of system requirements. The IESO's Resource Adequacy Framework establishes a long-term strategy for procuring resources while balancing ratepayer and supplier risks and recognizing the unique characteristics and contributions of different resource types. Provincial resource needs are addressed through this framework, and any non-wires solutions identified through bulk or regional planning processes would be implemented through competitive mechanisms determined following publication of the plan.

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	The IESO will continue to engage with stakeholders as planning work progresses, including sharing identified needs, options, and assessment results through upcoming engagement sessions.
Indigenous Participation RRFN advocated for greater Indigenous participation and ownership opportunities in transmission, distribution, and renewable energy projects.	The IESO recognizes that Indigenous engagement and economic participation are critical to the success of electricity infrastructure projects in Ontario. The IESO is subject to policy direction from the Ministry of Energy and Mines with respect to the inclusion of requirements related to Indigenous economic participation in any IESO programs or procurements. The IESO will share feedback with the Ministry to inform the approach for any transmission projects arising from the Northwest Ontario IRRP. The IESO offers funding support through the Indigenous Energy Support Program (IESP). The IESP promotes broad equitable participation in Ontario's energy sector for Indigenous communities and organizations, including by offering funding to support assessment and development of opportunities for partnerships and participation in new or existing energy infrastructure projects. The IESO encourages Indigenous communities to reach out with any questions that they may have regarding the IESP at iesp@ieso.ca.

Considerations for Engagements

Feedback/Common Themes	IESO Response
Increase Transparency and Information Sharing ORA advocated for the public release of the Northern Ontario Connection Study, confirmation that non-wires alternatives are	Thank you for this feedback. The IESO is in the advanced stages of finalizing the Northern Ontario Connection Study and is in the process of working with the Ministry of Energy and Mines on next steps.

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evaluated on an equal footing with transmission options, and disclosure of option costs on a basis to support informed evaluation of trade-offs.	Questions on publication of the report, timing and next steps would be best addressed to the Ministry.
Strengthen Accountability and Demonstrate How Feedback Is Used RRFN advocated for regular updates on forecast assumptions and methodologies, infrastructure constraints, capacity limitations, planned transmission and distribution investments, project timelines, and how stakeholder feedback is influencing decisions. ORA recommended a formal commitment to providing written responses to major stakeholder concerns and comments throughout the planning process.	The TWG acknowledges the importance of community preferences during regional electricity planning. To ensure that the IRRP reflects the needs of the Northwest region, all municipalities, Indigenous communities, community members and interested parties have an opportunity to share feedback throughout the IRRP development by continuing to provide written feedback in response to engagement sessions or posted documents, or by requesting a one-on-one meeting. A summary of feedback received and how it was considered throughout the IRRP development will be published in the IRRP report. The TWG will continue to provide written responses to received stakeholder feedback after each major milestone during IRRP development.
Enhance Indigenous and First Nations Engagement, and Ongoing Engagement Throughout the Planning Process RRFN advocated for additional targeted engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations, including dedicated discussions on Indigenous priorities, growth projections, infrastructure needs, and economic development opportunities that may not be captured in traditional forecasting approaches. RRFN also emphasized the importance of continuous engagement rather than engagement only at key milestones to ensure emerging opportunities and changing community priorities are reflected in planning.	The Technical Working Group appreciates this feedback and remains committed to engagement throughout the planning process. Input from the many voices and various perspectives across the electricity sector is essential to the IESO's decision-making process. The IESO encourages communities to share emerging or changing opportunities with their LDC to ensure up to date priorities are reflected in planning. The IESO continuously strives to develop new and meaningful relationships through purposeful, transparent outreach.

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ORA advocated for a clear mechanism to address First Nations local-access concerns, particularly where transmission infrastructure crosses community territories without directly serving local load or development needs.	Under the External Relations Engagement Framework and the Indigenous Engagement Framework, the IESO is charting a collective path forward for Indigenous communities, stakeholders, and municipalities to plan for the energy transition while remaining reliable, affordable and sustainable.

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