

NWT Board Forum

September 24, 2008

The Honourable Chuck Strahl, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and
Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
Indian and Northern Affairs
10 Wellington Street
GATINEAU, QC K1A 0H4

Dear Minister Strahl:

The Northwest Territories Board Forum would like to congratulate you on the recent publication of *“Road to Improvement: the review of the regulatory systems across the North”* prepared by Neil McCrank as your Special Representative for the Northern Regulatory Improvement Initiative. This is a landmark report that may have profound implications for resource development in the NWT.

The Board Forum members recognize the merit of many of the recommendations set out in the *Road to Improvement*. In fact, many of the recommendations echo proposed actions from past reports. Board Forum members, individually and collectively, have moved forward in the implementation of improvement initiatives. For example, our Boards have established cooperative programs to increase our regulatory capacity and efficiency, including working groups to support technical orientation and training for regulatory officials; strategic planning processes, and formal MOUs to support harmonized regulatory processes and information sharing.

As a result, Board Forum members have essential expertise and experience to support the next steps in the process.

We are pleased to provide some initial strategic feedback on *Road to Improvement*, from the collective perspective of the NWT regulatory, environmental impact assessment and co-management boards.

We understand that next steps will involve consideration of Mr. McCrank’s recommendations and development of an implementation plan. Board Forum members, as partners and stakeholders in Northern regulatory improvement; expect to be part of a sustained and constructive dialogue in this process.

The following three themes are critical to success of the dialogue:

- Recognition and respect for the Aboriginal rights entrenched in land claim and self-government settlements that underpin self-determination of resource development and management across the NWT. In this spirit, any options for changes to the regulatory systems established pursuant to those agreements shall require the approval of the parties to those agreements.

- The need for continued involvement of our community members in managing land and resources through both board membership and participation in regional planning processes and regulatory decision making;
- The need for an efficient and effective regulatory framework that can be sustained and improved by Northerners, and is responsive to appropriate development initiatives. This implies efficient and expert Northern regulators focusing on outcomes rather than process.

The NWT Board Forum considers several issues to be priorities for action in the short and medium term.

While Mr. McCrank's report is being reviewed and an implementation plan developed, the current regulatory system must continue to operate effectively. Three short term actions are essential. Both a timely appointment process and sustained and appropriate multi-year funding are required for the institutions that must deliver the regulatory framework on behalf of Northerners and all Canadians. As well, effective partnerships between national and regional institutions are needed, and can only occur if accountability requirements are clarified.

In the medium term, completion and approval of land use plans for the Mackenzie Valley, and implementation of those plans, is required.

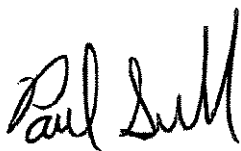
The Board Forum, as an active partner and stakeholder, will support you in the development of an appropriate plan of action for these short and medium term changes.

The *Road to Improvement* process provided a timely and excellent opportunity to constructively identify options for how the Northern regulatory system could be improved. We thank you for your leadership on this important initiative and look forward to partnering with you during the next steps.

Sincerely,



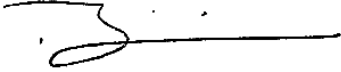
Willard Hagen, Chairperson
Mackenzie Valley Land & Water Board



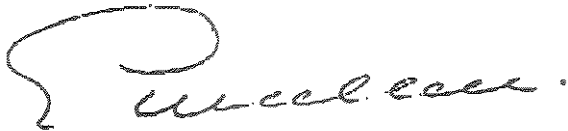
Paul Sullivan, Chair
Gwich'in Land & Water Board



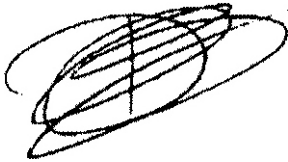
Violet Camsell-Blondin, Chair
Wek'èezhii Land & Water Board



Richard Edjericon, Chairperson
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board



Larry Wallace, Special Representative
Sahtu Land & Water Board



Danny Bayha, Interim Chair
Sahtu Land Use Planning Board



Walter Bayha, Chair
Sahtu Renewable Resources Board



Robert Charlie, Chair
Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board



Robert Simpson, Chairperson
Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board



Fred McFarland, Chair
Environmental Impact Screening Committee
for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

Copied to: The Honourable Gary Lunn
Minister of Natural Resources

The Honourable Floyd Roland, Premier
Government of the Northwest Territories

Gaétan Caron, Chair
National Energy Board

Nellie Cournoyea, Chair
Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Richard Nerysoo, President
Gwich'in Tribal Corporation

Larry Torangeau, President
Sahtu Secretariat Inc.

Frank Andrew, Grand Chief
Sahtu Dene Council

George Mackenzie, Grand Chief
Tlicho Government

Gary Bohnet, Assistant Deputy Minister,
ENR, GNWT

Trish Merrithew-Mercredi, RDG
INAC, NWT Region

Stephen Traynor, Director,
Resource Policy and Programs Directorate, INAC

Eric Yaxley, Manager
Board Relations Secretariat, INAC

Alfonz Nitsiza, Chair
Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board

Frank Pokiak, Chair
Inuvialuit Game Council

Elizabeth Snider, Chair
Environmental Impact Review Board
for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

Eddie Dillon, Chair
Northwest Territories Water Board