



Former Review Board Members Withdraw Names from Reappointment Consideration

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YELLOWKNIFE—The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (the Review Board) would like to thank former Review Board Members Danny Bayha and Bernadette Stewart for their years of service to the residents and communities of the Mackenzie Valley.

Regrettably, Mr. Bayha and Ms. Stewart informed the Review Board this week that they are no longer seeking reappointment, in part, due to delays in the federal appointment process. Their terms as Review Board members ended last month.

Last spring, Mr. Bayha and Ms. Stewart told the Review Board that they would both be seeking reappointment when their terms ended in October 2006. The Review Board forwarded this information to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Jim Prentice in April 2006.

“We were very happy last spring when Danny and Bernadette told us that they wanted to be reappointed to the Review Board after their terms expired in October of this year,” says Review Board Chairperson Gabrielle Mackenzie-Scott, “The Review Board was very forthcoming with Minister Prentice about the Board’s support for reappointing Danny and Bernadette to another three-year term.”

The Sahtu Secretariat Inc. first nominated Mr. Bayha for a Review Board appointment in 2000 then re-nominated him for another term in 2003, and in 2006. The Government of Canada nominated Ms. Stewart for appointment to the Review Board in 2003; then-Minister of INAC Robert Nault appointed Ms. Stewart soon after.

Mr. Bayha is a Sahtu Dene businessperson who lives and works in Deline. He speaks North Slavey and English fluently and has an undergraduate science degree.

“Danny’s perceptive and insightful—he worked tirelessly to keep the concerns and issues of First Nations and aboriginal people front-and-centre during our environmental impact assessment work,” says Chairperson Mackenzie-Scott. “The Review Board will have a hard time finding another person with Danny’s background and passion.”

Ms. Stewart is the president of a successful Yellowknife-based expediting company. A professional engineer, Ms. Stewart moved North in the 1980s to work for the N.W.T. Housing Corporation.

“Bernadette’s been successful in business and government,” says Mackenzie-Scott, “And she was very generous in sharing her knowledge and experience with the Review Board.

With Mr. Bayha and Ms. Stewart no longer seeking reappointment, the Review Board is deeply concerned that its ability to conduct environmental impact assessments in the Mackenzie Valley is being compromised.

The Review Board is a co-management board comprised of nine members, including the Chairperson. The Gwich’in Tribal Council, the Sahtu Secretariat, the Tlicho Government and the Dehcho First Nations each nominate a person to serve the Board. The N.W.T. and federal governments nominate the other four members. The Minister of INAC appoints members to the Review Board based on these nominations.

“The Review Board needs two members nominated by land-claim organizations and two members nominated by the territorial and federal governments present during our Board meetings to achieve quorum,” says Mackenzie-Scott, “Right now, we only have nominees from the Tlicho Government and the Gwich’in Tribal Council serving the Board; if one of these members is sick or unable to attend a Board meeting, we lose quorum and the Review Board can’t conduct its work.”

The federal *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA) established the Review Board in 1998. Though enacted by the federal government, the MVRMA resulted directly from land-claim negotiations. The federal government and land-claim organizations created the MVRMA to give First Nations and aboriginal peoples of the Mackenzie Valley a greater say in resource development and management.

The Review Board is currently conducting eight environmental impact assessments in the Mackenzie Valley. The proposed developments undergoing EIA range from small mineral exploration programs to large, multi-year mining operations.

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