



Media Advisory

Mackenzie Gas Project ordered to panel review

Yellowknife, NT. (April 20, 2004) : The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board today issued an order referring the Mackenzie Gas Project's proposal to build a natural gas pipeline to an Environmental Impact Review. The referral follows the conclusion of the scoping hearings held in Fort Simpson the previous week.

The Review Board also requested approval from the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, pursuant to paragraph 141(2)(a) of the MVRMA and consistent with the *Cooperation Plan for the Environmental Impact Assessment and Regulatory Review of a Northern Gas Pipeline*, for it to enter in to an Agreement with the Minister of the Environment to establish a Joint Review Panel to conduct the Environmental Impact Review of the Mackenzie Gas Project.

The Review Board made its referral based on evidence gathered in the hearings held in Norman Wells, Inuvik and Fort Simpson that the project is likely to be a cause of significant public concern. The Board heard a strong consensus of opinions at all three venues in favour of the need for a full and thorough environmental impact review of the Mackenzie Gas Project. This consensus also included a recommendation for such an outcome by representatives of the Mackenzie Gas Project. The Board's written Reasons for Decision will be issued shortly.

"A coordinated review by the Joint Review Panel will give this project the most demanding level of impact assessment in line with the size and nature of the project and its potential impacts," said Mr. Todd Burlingame, Chair of the Review Board. "The examination of this project will be an open and thorough process and for this particular project, the Joint Review Panel is uniquely equipped to do just that."

The Review Board, in its letter to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, noted that submissions made in all regions pointed out that government has not yet satisfied NWT communities' needs for support in order to understand, address and respond to this proposed development. The Board also noted that the unique situation in the Deh Cho region in relation to unsettled land ownership issues must be addressed. This will require additional effort and attention by all parties involved in the environmental impact review and regulatory approvals of the Mackenzie Gas Project.

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