



October 29, 2013

Mr. Jim Stevens
Director
Mackenzie Valley Highway
Department of Transportation
Government of the Northwest Territories
Yellowknife, NT

Dear Sir:

RE: Effect of Construction Timing on Mackenzie Valley Highway Impact Assessment Predictions

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (Review Board) is developing final terms of reference (ToR) for the preparation of the Developer's Assessment Report by the Government of the Northwest Territories. As a result of its review of Project Description Reports and the recent scoping meetings held in affected communities, the Review Board has identified several fundamental questions which it requires the Department of Transportation (developer) to answer so that the ToR can be finalized.

The Review Board understands the developer proposes to construct a highway from Wrigley to a point on the Dempster Highway near Inuvik. Further, the Mackenzie Highway will likely be constructed in segments and the schedule for each segment and for completing the entire highway is not known at this time. More specifically, the developer has described a construction schedule that may only involve constructing and then operating the highway from Wrigley to Norman Wells for an indeterminate period. Thus, the entire length of the highway may not be built at one time or on a schedule which facilitates the evaluation of the environmental impacts in a manner that enables the Review Board to determine the potential impacts of this staged development with confidence and advise the federal Minister accordingly.

To illustrate this concern, caribou and moose harvesting has been identified in community scoping sessions as an issue of some importance. Wildlife populations are dynamic and the Review Board is concerned that predictions of highway impacts based on current wildlife population levels may not be valid in 5, 10 or more years from now, when the more northern segments of the highway are actually built. Similar concerns exist in relation to the accuracy of impact predictions on other environmental variables, ranging from water resources to climate and permafrost and even socio-economic considerations.

In light of this concern, a supplementary submission is requested from the developer discussing how this staged construction schedule will affect the stated purpose(s) of constructing a through,



or loop highway, in light of each of the purposes of constructing the highway identified on page 2-1 of the Developer's Environmental Scoping Document.

The developer must also discuss how the extended time frame and sequential construction of this development will affect the accuracy and reliability of the impact predictions it must make during the environmental assessment process. This reliability analysis should be completed with respect to all key valued ecosystem components. The developer will indicate how these matters will affect its impact predictions should construction and operation of highway segments not take place for 5, 10 or 20 years after completion of the environmental assessment. The response to this question should be quantified to the extent possible and where professional judgment is applied, the individuals involved should be identified and their qualifications provided as part of the submission.

Depending on the outcome of this analysis, the Review Board will frame its approach to the temporal scope of the impact determinations necessary in this proceeding. The final ToR will be completed once the Board has your response to these questions and we have heard from the parties.

The developer's submission is requested by November 15, 2013.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vern Christensen', written over a horizontal line.

Vern Christensen
Executive Director

cc. MVEIRB Counsel
Public Registry