



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REVIEW BOARD

Media Release

January 25, 2013

The Review Panel approves the proposed Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway Project

Inuvik - On January 25, 2013 the Panel appointed by the Environmental Impact Review Board submitted the **FINAL REPORT of the Panel for the Substituted Environmental Impact Review of the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, Town of Inuvik, and GNWT – Proposal to Construct the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, [02/10-05]** to the Minister of the Environment and federal authorities authorized to approve this development. The Project includes the construction, operation and maintenance of a 140 kilometer, all-weather gravel highway from the Town of Inuvik to the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, located in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories.

The Project was reviewed in accordance with section 11 of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement and subject to a substituted environmental review process pursuant to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

The Review Panel has concluded that this Development should proceed, subject to the commitments made by the Developer and the measures recommended in the Report. The Review Panel considers these measures necessary to prevent or mitigate any significant environmental or socio-economic effects resulting from the Project, and to minimize negative impacts on wildlife harvesting.

The Review Panel's final report is available on line in the public registry at www.eirb.ca.

A Summary of the decision and recommendations of the Review Panel is provided as an attachment to this News Release.



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About the Environmental Impact Review Board

The environmental impact screening and review process set out in the Inuvialuit Final Agreement establishes the Environmental Impact Screening Committee and the Environmental Impact Review Board which are responsible for environmental impact screening and environmental impact review in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Northwest Territories.

A five member Panel of the Review Board members conducted the public review and wrote the report setting out its findings and recommendations for Ministers and competent government authorities.

For further information, please contact, Eli Nasogaluak, EIRB Environmental Assessment Coordinator at eirb@jointsec.nt.ca or call (867) 777-2828.



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Requesting information

If you are looking for information please call Eli Nasogaluak at the Joint Secretariat, Inuvik.

Because of the quasi-judicial nature of the Review Board, there are limitations as to what the Chairperson, Members and staff can speak about. Review Board decisions, submissions made by other parties or any other evidence must speak for itself. The staff cannot provide interpretation or explanations of any information that is on the public record. All the information is available on the Review Board's website.

If you would like to gain a better understanding of the information on the public record, please contact the groups or individuals who submitted the particular document. It is advisable to make sure they have had a chance to read the decision before soliciting comments.

Finding background information and other interview sources

There are a number of sources you can use for background information about the Review Board and ongoing assessments.

Aside from the public registry, which contains all the information the Review Board has on file, contact the developer of the project under assessment. Review Board staff will only be able to give you a cursory overview of the project. The developer is best suited to describe its own project.



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For the ITH environmental assessment, the following groups were listed as registered parties:

Government Parties to the Proceeding	Inuvialuit Parties to the Proceeding
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC)	Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee (Aklavik HTC)
Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) - Northern Projects Management Office (NPMO)	Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC)
Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)	Inuvialuit Land Administration (ILA)
Environment Canada (EC)	Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (NWT) (WMAC)
Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) – coordinating all GNWT departments	
Health Canada (HC)	
Infrastructure Canada (INFC)	
Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)	
Parks Canada (PC)	
Transport Canada (TC)	
Other Parties to the Proceeding	
Inuvik Community Corporation (ICC)	Tuktoyaktuk Inuvik Working Group (TIWG)
Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation (TCC)	

You may wish to contact these groups to find out more about the information they submitted to the Review Board for consideration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Report of the Panel for the Substituted Environmental Impact Review of the Proposal to Construct the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway Developer: Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, Town of Inuvik and Government of the Northwest Territories

This report sets out the decision and recommendations of the Panel established by the Environmental Impact Review Board (EIRB) under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement to complete a review of the proposed Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway (ITH). The Project includes the activities and infrastructure associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of a 140-kilometre all-weather gravel highway from the Town of Inuvik to the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, located in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories. The Developer for this Project collectively is the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, Town of Inuvik and Government of the Northwest Territories (Developer).

The Project was reviewed in accordance with s.11 of the IFA and subject to a substituted environmental review process under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). In conducting this substituted review, the EIRB was responsible for meeting the requirements of both the IFA and the CEAA. The Project was referred to the EIRB on April 27, 2010 by the Environmental Impact Screening Committee, on the grounds that the proposed development had the potential for significant negative impacts on the environment and on Inuvialuit harvesting due to the potential for cumulative impacts.

During the review, the Developer filed an Environmental Impact Statement and supplementary evidence identifying the impacts that could occur as a result of the Project. This analysis addressed biophysical and socio-economic impacts of importance to the region. Evidence and recommendations were also received from registered Parties, community representatives, Elders, members of the public and intervenors throughout the review. This included hearing from community members in Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk during the Panel's public hearings. Having carefully considered the evidence and information before it, the Panel has concluded that this development should proceed, subject to the commitments made by the Developer and the measures recommended by the Panel in this report. These recommended measures are necessary to prevent or mitigate the adverse environmental effects which would otherwise result from the Project.

Upon the review of the record in this proceeding, it is clear to the Panel that the development will generate significant benefits for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, affected communities and the Northwest Territories. These economic and socio-economic benefits include not only economic stimulus to the local and territorial economies but employment, training and the resulting improvements in the lives of residents of the region. In addition to these tangible benefits, the Project will yield important intangible benefits, both territorially and nationally. This highway Project will result in the construction of a key piece of public infrastructure which will benefit the region over the long term and should eventually be important to the oil and gas industry. The highway may also be important from the standpoint of national sovereignty, representing the last link in a highway system from sea to sea to sea, connecting the Beaufort Sea and the Arctic by road to the rest of Canada.

Despite the important benefits which will result from the Project, the Panel has determined that it will cause impacts on the environment. They include impacts on habitat and wildlife such as caribou and grizzly bear, species of great importance to Inuvialuit. The Panel has also

determined that impacts will result from highway construction and aggregate extraction activities including impacts on the sensitive terrain crossed by the highway. These impacts along with any potential impacts to the Husky Lakes must, in the Panel's view, be carefully mitigated, monitored and managed. The Panel's review of the environmental components of the Developer's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) unfortunately led to concern about the quality of this assessment and the certainty of the impact predictions made by the Developer. In order to address these concerns and ensure that all significant impacts are mitigated, the Panel has recommended that an adaptive management approach be adopted to minimize and manage the environmental impacts of the Project. The Panel also recommends the establishment of an Independent Environmental Monitoring and Oversight Committee (IEMOC). This Committee should be established and adequately funded prior to construction to provide oversight on all aspects of environmental management and to provide a vehicle for community involvement in Project monitoring activities. The IEMOC would oversee the Developer's performance in meeting its commitments, and oversee the design and implementation of a comprehensive Environmental Monitoring and Management Plan which would be integrated into an adaptive management framework in order to mitigate Project impacts.

The Panel recognizes that for this ITH Project, the responsibility for ensuring environmental protection in order to prevent damage to wildlife and its habitat and to avoid disruption of Inuvialuit harvesting, rests with the co-management bodies and Inuvialuit organizations. Inuvialuit land claim institutions share these environmental protection responsibilities with the regulatory authorities that will issue authorizations for the Project to proceed. By working together to implement the recommendations set out in this report, and coordinate their Project management activities the Panel is confident that these Inuvialuit and government organizations will ensure that the environment is protected and that regional and local benefits are realized. The Panel has determined that the potential adverse effects of the Project can be mitigated and properly managed if the Panel's recommendations and the Developer's commitments are implemented.