

Mackenzie Gas Project

Since the Joint Review Panel hearings concluded almost 2 years ago, preparations have been made to ensure that the Government of the Northwest Territories has all the necessary tools to participate and represent the best interests of Northerners in the regulatory process of this highly anticipated project.

We are nearing the end of the environmental assessment review process. The Joint Review Panel will be releasing its Report and recommendations in two short months.

As we speak, much work has been underway to get ready for the release of this report. A JRP Review team has been established to coordinate the Government of the Northwest Territories review to the recommended measures. Even today, Mr. Speaker, Environment and Natural Resource employees are meeting in Calgary to discuss important issues regarding the Mackenzie Gas Project Joint Review Panel. We will have a short window to consider the Joint Review Panel report so we are ensuring we are ready to hit the ground running.

Based on the timeline for release of the Joint Review Panel report, the National Energy Board recently announced it intends to hear final arguments on the Mackenzie Gas Project application in April 2010. The National Energy Board has indicated that they will deliver their reasons for Decision in September 2010.

We anticipate that, following a positive decision by the National Energy Board, receipt of a number of regulatory Permits, and updating of their financial analysis, the Mackenzie Gas Project Proponents will be in a position to make a decision to construct by late 2011.

With a positive decision by the proponents, our expectation is that construction on this unprecedented Project will begin immediately. Gas is expected to flow from the Mackenzie Gas Project by 2016.

As you all know, up to this point, significant human and financial resources have been invested to support our residents, businesses, Aboriginal organizations and communities to help develop the necessary capacity that will allow them to take full advantage of the benefits generated by the Project.

Apart from its numerous economic benefits, which I have emphasized time and again, this Project also has environmental benefits which we must consider.

In North America, the completion of the Mackenzie Gas Project will help displace other fossil fuels that produce much more significant greenhouse gas emissions.

It is imperative that this cleaner fuel be brought to market to contribute to the battle on climate change.

It is encouraging to see the sustained efforts of federal Environment Minister Prentice to ensure the smooth development and a fruitful conclusion to the fiscal discussions between the Government of Canada and the Project Proponents. As reported in the media earlier this week and confirmed to us by the federal government, these negotiations continue.

We also commend the Northwest Territories Chamber of Commerce and their success in having the Canadian Chamber adopt a significant resolution of support for the Mackenzie Gas Project and maximizing First Nations involvement. This work will help keep the profile of this Project at the highest levels in the business community and on the national stage.

Also, more evidence that things are moving in the right direction is the recently concluded Access and Benefits Agreement of the K'asho Got'ine district in the Sahtu

region. This means that only one more Access and Benefits Agreement needs to be signed in order to ensure that all affected Regions secure enhanced benefits along the pipeline corridor.

We remain hopeful that the Dehcho First Nations will also participate fully in the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and thus realize significant and long term economic return from this Project through direct ownership.

This Project is another opportunity to ensure a positive future for our children. It is the first step of what promises to be an unprecedented era of prosperity and stability in our part of Canada.

As we reach the conclusion of the regulatory process, I invite all Members to join me in confirming our commitment to the economic future of the Northwest Territories and the environmental benefits that this Project will bring.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.