

Review process on schedule, ready to receive summer application for Mackenzie Gas Project

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For Immediate Release**

INUVIK, Northwest Territories (April 23, 2004) – Members of the Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Chairs’ Executive Committee have completed several steps in the process to review the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project, reflecting their commitments last month to complete their work in a timely manner.

The signing of the Regulators’ Agreement, announcement of participant funding for the environmental review of the project and timely referral decision to a joint review panel by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board have been completed.

“We are keeping a steady course as planned and there is no need to adjust our timelines,” said National Energy Board Chairman Ken Vollman, speaking on behalf of the Chairs’ committee. “We will be ready to receive an application on the Mackenzie Gas Project this summer.”

The chairs met in Inuvik to review progress and to open the office of the Northern Gas Project Secretariat. The chairs represent the Inuvialuit Game Council, Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, NWT Water Board, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the National Energy Board.

Also in Inuvik were signatories to the Regulators’ Agreement, which outlines commitments by various regulatory bodies to coordinate their respective processes.

The Executive Director of the Northern Gas Project Secretariat, Brian Chambers, also announced the appointment of two community relations and logistics managers to staff the Inuvik and Yellowknife offices. Robert Turner and Marie-Anick Elie will work with the communities to assist the public in better understanding the environmental assessment and regulatory review process.

The Chairs renewed their commitment to complete the following next steps, as identified during their March meeting:

- To complete a final draft Environmental Impact Statement Terms of Reference and release the draft for public comment by June 1.

- To complete the final draft Agreement for an Environmental Impact Review of a Northern Gas Project (known as the Joint Review Panel Agreement) and release the draft for public comment by June 1.
- To nominate members for appointment to the Joint Review Panel by the end of June. The panel would be an independent body of seven people appointed as set out in the *Cooperation Plan*.
- To finalize the Joint Review Panel Agreement and Terms of Reference by early July.

The Chairs expect to meet again in Yellowknife in June.

The Northern Gas Project Secretariat was established to ensure that the public has easy and efficient access to information related to the environmental assessment and regulatory review of the Mackenzie Gas Project, and to coordinate public involvement.

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