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News Release

Federal Environment Minister, Chair of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board and Chair of the Inuvialuit Game Council Establish Joint Review Panel for the Mackenzie Gas Project

YELLOWKNIFE, Northwest Territories (August 18, 2004) – The Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of the Environment, Mr. Todd Burlingame, Chairperson of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board and Mr. Frank Pokiak, Chair of the Inuvialuit Game Council, announced today the establishment of a seven member joint panel to review the Mackenzie Gas Project. The three parties signed an agreement and finalized the Terms of Reference for the review of the proposed project. Over thirty individuals and groups provided comments on the draft documents.

The independent joint review panel consists of seven members: Ms. Gina Dolphus, Mr. Barry Greenland, Mr. Percy Hardisty, Mr. Rowland Harrison, Mr. Robert Hornal, Mr. Tyson Pertschy and Mr. Peter Usher. Mr. Hornal will serve as chairperson of the panel. Biographical information on each of the panel members is available in the accompanying [Backgrounder](#).

The panel's mandate is to evaluate the potential impacts of the project on the environment and lives of the people in the project area. This independent body will also work to fulfill the environmental impact assessment responsibilities of the land claims agreements, as well as federal legislation. The combined knowledge and experience of all seven members will ensure a rigorous review of all issues of concern to northern communities and Canadians.

The Minister and the Chairs signed the joint *Agreement for an Environmental Impact Review of the Mackenzie Gas Project* (the Agreement) and issued the finalized *Terms of Reference for the Environmental Impact Statement for the Mackenzie Gas Project*. The finalization of these documents follows a public comment period which ended on July 15, 2004. It is anticipated that the proponent will file the Environmental Impact Statement at the same time as a project application with the National Energy Board later this summer.

“The release of the Joint Review Panel Agreement and announcement of the panel members is a momentous milestone, marking many months of collaborative work,” Minister Dion said. “By agreeing to harmonize the environmental assessment processes into one that meets the requirements of all three jurisdictions, the parties have shown an

unprecedented degree of cooperation on such an important undertaking.” He added, “I am confident the panel members will undertake a very rigorous, independent review on behalf of all Canadians.”

“The parties worked extremely hard on drafting the Terms of Reference,” said Frank Pokiak, Chair of the Inuvialuit Game Council. “We were pleased and impressed with the broad range of comments received from the public on the draft and we are confident that those comments have helped produce a final document which will ensure that the Mackenzie Gas Project undergoes the most rigorous environmental assessment.”

Todd Burlingame, Chairperson of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, added he is pleased with the cooperative approach to the review of the proposed project. “These documents are designed to be clear, concise and focused on the priority issues,” Mr. Burlingame said. “They have been developed as a team effort and take into account input received from the public. They will result in an environmental impact statement that meets the rigorous requirements expected by the people of the North and all Canadians.”

The Agreement outlines how the environmental assessment processes for the Mackenzie Gas Project may be harmonized by establishing a joint review panel process that meets the requirements of both the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*. It also ensures the joint review will encompass certain unique measures related to wildlife impact assessment as contained in the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. The Agreement describes the mandate of the joint review panel, the legislative framework of the process, the scope of the review, the factors to be considered and guidelines with respect to the panel process and timelines.

The Terms of Reference contain guidelines for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project. The document outlines the nature and scope of the issues that the proponent must address when preparing its EIS. The EIS will serve as a basis for the joint panel’s review and evaluation of the potential environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts of the project.

Copies of the documents are available on the website of the Northern Gas Project Secretariat at www.ngps.nt.ca, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency at www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca and the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board at www.mveirb.nt.ca.

Comments from the public on the June 2, 2004 drafts of the EIS Terms of Reference and the *Joint Review Panel Agreement* can be read on the Northern Gas Project Secretariat website at www.ngps.nt.ca.

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