

## Next steps identified for Mackenzie Gas Project review process

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For Immediate Release

**CALGARY (March 11, 2004)** – The Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Chairs’ Executive Committee has formalized the next steps in a process to review the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project.

The Chairs meet regularly to share information and ensure that decisions within their mandates are made in a timely and coordinated manner. They 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.

“By confirming established timelines now to process an application, the committee members are setting a firm foundation to meet expectations for a thorough, timely and transparent processing of an application once it is filed,” said National Energy Board Chairman Ken Vollman, speaking on behalf of the Chairs’ committee.

The next steps reflect commitments established in the *Cooperation Plan for the Environmental Impact Assessment and Regulatory Review of a Northern Gas Project through the Northwest Territories*. It was published in June 2002.

The Chairs agreed that by setting key dates they are demonstrating their commitment to the people of the north and all interested parties in the application process, which will continue to be transparent and open to public scrutiny.

The Chairs agreed to the following next steps:

- To release details on the participant funding program for the Joint Review Panel by early April and to establish a committee by the end of April to review the funding applications.
- To open the Inuvik office of the Northern Gas Project Secretariat by early April.
- To finalize a Regulators’ Agreement by the end of April outlining commitments by various regulatory bodies to coordinate their respective processes.

- To support the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board's commitment to finalize its Phase One Environmental Assessment and make a decision on a Joint Review Panel referral by May 21.
- 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 appoint members 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 commitments made by Chairs today will ensure that the various boards and agencies are prepared to process an application by July,” said Brian Chambers, Executive Director of the Northern Gas Project Secretariat.

The Chairs expect to meet again in Inuvik in April.

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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