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YUKON INTERESTS ADVANCED IN MACKENZIE GAS PROJECT HEARINGS

Whitehorse — Two years of intensive efforts by Yukon government officials came to a close Thursday in Inuvik, NWT as the Joint Review Panel completed its hearings on the Mackenzie Gas Project.

Intervention by Yukon government officials has resulted in major commitments for Yukon from the project proponent, Imperial Oil.

“We went from not being on the radar screen to securing significant commitments from Imperial Oil in relation to our interests in the Mackenzie Gas Project,” Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Archie Lang said. “These interests are both socio-economic and environmental. As a result of our intervention, and a dialogue we initiated with the proponent, we now have commitments from Imperial to address six main Yukon interests.”

Those interests include transportation, training and education, employment, business opportunities, socio-cultural impacts and wildlife.

In a letter to the Yukon government, now filed with the Joint Review Panel, Imperial Oil commits to provide employment opportunities to qualified, interested and available northerners, including Yukon residents, in preference to equally qualified southerners. Where business opportunities are concerned, Yukon companies will be deemed ‘northern businesses’ for the procurement of goods and services for the project.

“We also have a commitment from Imperial for ongoing dialogue throughout construction of the project,” Lang added.

The proponent’s latest estimate for completion of the Mackenzie Gas Project is 2014. Construction of the project would take approximately four years. The Joint Review Panel and National Energy Board hearings on the Mackenzie Gas Project began in early 2006. National Energy Board hearings wrapped up in October.

Over the next year, the Joint Review Panel will consider Yukon’s remaining issues and those of other parties and submit their final report to the Government of Canada, which will review the report and make recommendations. These recommendations will then be sent to the National Energy Board, which will reconvene and prepare its final report on whether the project should proceed. This process is expected to conclude in mid-2009.

The National Energy Board hearings focused on technical, financial and commercial matters; while the Joint Review Panel hearings focused on the environmental and socio-economic effects associated with the proponent’s proposal.

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Backgrounder: Letter from Imperial Oil

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