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GOVERNMENT PROTECTING YUKON INTEREST IN NORTHERN PIPELINE

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon government is intervening in two hearings to ensure the Yukon’s interests are addressed in the application process for a Mackenzie gas project.

The National Energy Board (NEB) and the Joint Review Panel (JRP) hearings for the Mackenzie Gas Project are evaluating the technical aspects and the socio-economic and environmental impacts respectively of the natural gas pipeline from the Northwest Territories to Alberta.

“We are actively involved in the NEB hearings to ensure our gas reserves are not stranded,” Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Archie Lang said. “We are making the case for an expandable open access gas line which would offer attractive economics to connect Yukon gas reserves to market.”

Lang was encouraged to learn that other interveners in the NEB hearing process share the Yukon’s issues and interests.

In its ongoing NEB intervention strategy, the government is using the results of petroleum resource assessments for Eagle Plains and the Peel Plateau that were recently released by the Geological Survey of Canada, to properly ‘book’ North Yukon gas reserves of an estimated potential of nine trillion cubic feet. The Yukon’s gas potential rivals the size of those in the Northwest Territories and are only a few hundred kilometres from the proposed pipeline route.

The Yukon government has submitted information requests to the JRP regarding the Yukon’s key concerns. These include the socio-economic impacts, environmental and cumulative effects on the Yukon, the extent of the study area and the exclusion of the Yukon in the evaluation of the project.

“We want to maximize benefits from northern pipelines and ensure that the appropriate safeguards are in place to minimize adverse effects,” Lang said. “This project has the potential for significant employment, business opportunities, and future economic development in the Yukon. It is the key to the development of North Yukon gas resources. It is imperative that our concerns are heard and addressed in these hearings.”

The NEB regulates the technical and economic aspects of inter-provincial pipelines in Canada. The board will determine whether the project may proceed and the economic principles for transportation.

The JRP will determine how the project could affect the land, environment and lives of people in the project area. The public hearings will occur during this summer and fall. They are slated for completion in the fall of 2006.

Gas producers are planning for both the Mackenzie Gas and Alaska Highway Pipeline projects to go ahead due to forecasted gas demand increases. The estimated completion date for the pipeline projects are 2010 and 2012-2015 respectively.

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