



September 8, 2026

Frederick Blake Jr.
Grand Chief
Gwich'in Tribal Council
3 Council Crescent
Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0

BY EMAIL

Initiation of Consultation by the Governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada on the Environmental Assessment of the Mackenzie Valley Highway Project (MVEIRB File EA1213-02)

Dear Grand Chief Blake,
Dànch'ùh,

The Government of the Northwest Territories – Environment and Climate Change (GNWT), on behalf of territorial responsible Ministers, and the Northern Projects Management Office (NPMO), of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, on behalf of federal responsible Ministers (RMs) are writing to the Gwich'in Tribal Council to:

1. Notify you of, and invite you to participate in, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board's (Review Board) Environmental Assessment (EA) process for the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway Project (EA1213-02) (the Project) and any related engagement efforts of the developer;
2. Initiate formal Crown consultation with you, on the future decision that will be made by the GNWT and the Government of Canada (as represented by federal RMs) on the Review Board's Report of EA, as required under the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA); and
3. Advise you that the Crown is relying, to the extent possible, on the Review Board's process to assist in fulfilling the Crown's duty to consult, and if appropriate, accommodate.

Background on the Project

The GNWT Department of Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains (GNWT-Infrastructure or the developer) is proposing an all-season highway extending from Wrigley to the Dempster Highway, south of Inuvik, NT. The Project is undergoing EA by the Review Board under file number EA1213-02. Information on this EA is available on the Review Board's public registry at: <https://reviewboard.ca/registry/ea1213-02>.

The Project was originally planned to be an all-season highway from Wrigley to the Inuvik, NT area and was [referred to EA in 2013](#). In 2014, the developer reduced the scope to an all-season highway from Wrigley to Norman Wells, NT. The Review Board issued a [Terms of Reference](#) for this revised Project in 2015.

On March 12, 2026, the Project was referred to the federal Major Projects Office (MPO). Following engagement with the MPO, Indigenous Governments in the Dehcho, Sahtu, and Gwich'in regions, and discussions with the Review Board, the developer determined that the northern section from Norman Wells to the Dempster Highway, south of Inuvik, NT should be reintegrated into the Project and assessed as part of a single EA.

On August 14, 2026, the developer asked the Review Board to amend the scope of the EA to include the northern section. On August 20, 2026, the Review Board issued a [Notice of Proceeding](#), indicating its intention to proceed with the EA on the basis of the expanded project scope proposed by the developer. The Review Board has also indicated that it will hold community meetings starting in September and a technical session in Yellowknife in October 2026, to discuss the proposed changes and next steps in the EA process.

As the proposed expansion of the Project may have potential impacts not previously considered by the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the GNWT and the Government of Canada are initiating consultation with the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

The developer is conducting its own separate consultation process with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, as outlined in its letter to you on August 21, 2026. We encourage you to participate in GNWT-Infrastructure's consultation efforts since the developer is best placed to address concerns related to project design and construction.

Parallel, but separate, the Government of Canada, facilitated by the Major Projects Office, is currently consulting on its consideration for listing the Project as a "Project of National Interest" under Schedule 1 of the *Building Canada Act* (BCA). This consultation is being carried out with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations whose section 35 rights (*Constitution Act, 1982*) may be adversely affected as part of the listing decision. This consultation process was formally initiated on June 24, 2026, and a *Canada Gazette* comment period was also initiated on August 29, 2026. Both processes conclude on October 1, 2026. Following the conclusion of these consultations, the Government of Canada will render a decision by November 2, 2026, on whether or not to list the Project under the BCA. For any questions about the process for listing the MVH as a Project of National Interest under the BCA, please contact: MVH-RVM@mpo-bgp.gc.ca.

Approach to Consultation with Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations on behalf of Responsible Ministers

The GNWT and the Government of Canada have a duty to consult with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations and, if appropriate, accommodate, where there may be potential adverse impacts on asserted and/or established section 35 Aboriginal and/or Treaty rights resulting from a decision on the Review Board's Report of EA. Where possible, the GNWT and the Government of Canada undertake consultation jointly and rely on the Review Board's EA process as the primary means for assisting the Crown to fulfill its consultation and accommodation obligations related to

this decision. For information on the Review Board's approach to engagement and consultation, please refer to the Review Board's [Reference Bulletin on consultation and engagement in environmental impact assessment](#).

Because the GNWT and the Government of Canada rely on the Review Board's process to support Crown Consultation, your participation in this EA is important to help us understand how the Project could affect your section 35 rights. Your participation will also inform future steps in the Review Board's process, additional consultation that may be required, and allow potential concerns to be considered by the Review Board and federal and territorial responsible Ministers.

We note in your letter of August 28, 2026 addressed to the GNWT, in regards to the consultation process being led by the GNWT-Infrastructure, that the Gwich'in Tribal Council has indicated its intention to continue participating in the EA process and has confirmed Mr. David MacMartin, Special Advisor to the Gwich'in Tribal Council, as the Gwich'in Tribal Council's delegated representative for consultation and project-related discussions concerning the Project. We will address future correspondences related to this consultation to Mr. David MacMartin, unless otherwise notified by you. We value the Gwich'in Tribal Council's continued involvement, and we look forward to receiving any views you wish to share as the assessment progresses.

If you identify any potential adverse impacts to your section 35 rights with respect to the Project, we ask that you provide the following information to the Review Board:

- a. The specific right(s) that may potentially be adversely impacted;
- b. The specific potential adverse impact(s), and
- c. How the potential adverse impact(s) might be mitigated or accommodated.

Throughout the Review Board's process, the GNWT and the Government of Canada actively monitor, and track information provided by Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations regarding potential adverse impacts to asserted or established rights. The Crown will give full and thorough consideration to the information you provide during the Review Board's EA process, and during the decision phase, prior to any decision being made. The GNWT and the Government of Canada will share information received with one another, where possible.

In reaching our decision on the Review Board's Report of EA, the GNWT and the Government of Canada will also consider the developer's efforts, through its engagement and consultation activities, as reflected in the EA public record, to address and mitigate potential adverse impacts of the Project.

Participant Funding

Funding is available to individuals and groups to support their participation in the EA process through the [Northern Participant Funding Program](#). On August 21, 2026, Crown-Indigenous

Relations and Northern Affairs Canada announced the availability of participant funding for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 fiscal years. The intent of the funding is to provide resources to facilitate meaningful participation in the EA. The [funding guide](#) and the [application form](#) are available on the Review Board's public registry. You can also request these documents and more information by contacting: aidefinanciereparticipants-participantfunding@rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca.

End of Review Board's Process

At the end of the Review Board's process, the Review Board will issue its Report of EA. At that time, we will ask that you tell us whether the Review Board's conclusions, including any recommended mitigation measures and the developer's commitments, adequately address potential adverse impact(s) from the Project on your section 35 rights.

Before a final decision is made by the federal and territorial responsible Ministers, we will assess whether consultation has been adequate, including how potential adverse impacts to your section 35 rights have been considered, and whether accommodation of any outstanding concern(s) you may have is appropriate. Your views will help inform our decision making.

The developer will be excluded from the internal government decision-making process on the Review Board's Report of EA.

Government of Canada and GNWT contacts

The Project Assessment Branch of the Department of Environment and Climate Change is the consultation coordinator for the GNWT for the EA, as delegated by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. If you have any questions for the GNWT, please contact Lorraine Seale, Director, Impact Assessment and Security Management, at Lorraine.Seale@gov.nt.ca or 867-767-9180 ext. 24020.

NPMO is the Crown consultation coordinator for the Government of Canada for the EA. If you have any questions for the Government of Canada, please contact Shannon Allerston, A/ Project Director, at shannon.allerston@cannor.gc.ca or 867-445-7230.

Haj',



Lorraine Seale
Director
Impact Assessment and Security
Management

Jokela,
Anneli



Digitally signed by Jokela,
Anneli
Date: 2026.09.08 19:52:00
-06'00'

Anneli Jokela
Director General
Northern Projects Management
Office

c. Distribution List

Distribution List:

The Honourable R.J. Simpson
Premier

Kyla Kakfwi-Scott
Chief of Staff

Dr. Joe Dragon
Senior Envoy to the Government of Canada

John MacDonald
Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister, Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Shawn McCann
Deputy Secretary, Indigenous and Intergovernmental Affairs, Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Anita Walker
A/Director General, Natural Resources and Environment Branch, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Ron Pankratz
Regional Director General, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Robert Jenkins
Deputy Minister, Environment and Climate Change Canada

Gaeleen MacPherson
Associate Deputy Minister, Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains

Andrew Randall
Regional Director, Aquatic Ecosystems, Arctic Region, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Miranda MacPherson
Director, Chemicals and Environmental Health Management Bureau, Healthy Environments and Consumer Safety Branch, Health Canada

Rinaldo Jeanty

Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of Lands and Mineral Sector, Natural Resources
Canada

Alain Gagnon
A/Senior Project Manager, Northern Projects Management Office

Vera Haslett
Regional Director, Programs, Ontario, Prairies and Northern Region, Transport Canada

Christopher Aguirre
Senior Advisor, Indigenous Relations Unit, Ontario, Prairies and Northern Region,
Transport Canada

Duwayne Williams, P.Eng., MBA
Regional Director General – Ontario, Prairies and Northern Region, Transport Canada

Joanne Deneron
Chairperson, Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board

Paul Donald
Interim Chief Executive Officer, Gwich'in Tribal Council

Terri Sudnik
Executive Assistant to Grand Chief, Gwich'in Tribal Council

David MacMartin
Special Advisor to Grand Chief, Gwich'in Tribal Council

Kanda Gnama
Director, Lands and Resources, Gwich'in Tribal Council

Michael Auge
Director, Strategic Infrastructure, Gwich'in Tribal Council

Whitney Alexis
Senior Strategist, Government and Treaty Operations, Gwich'in Tribal Council

Michael Greenland, President, Ehdiitat Gwich'in Council

Kelly McLeod, President, Nihtat Gwich'in Council

Diane E. Koe, President, Tetl'it Gwich'in Council

Mavis Clark, President Gwichya Gwich'in Council

Anita Koe, Acting Executive Director, Tetlit Gwich'in Council

Debbie Greenland, Executive Director, Ehdiitat Gwich'in Council

Richard Nerysoo, Director, GTC, Tetlit Gwich'in Council

Chris Smith, Vice-President, Nihtat Gwich'in Council

Brenda MacDonald, Chief Executive Officer, Gwichya Gwich'in Council