



October 5, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mark Cliffe-Phillips
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Dear Mr. Cliffe-Phillip:

Mackenzie Valley Highway Project – Option 5: Fort Good Hope – Tsiigehtchic Route

During your Re-scoping session held in Tsiigehtchic, September 9, 2026 (Meeting ID: 821 2109 5089), I proposed an Option 5 route from Fort Good Hope to Tsiigehtchic (instead of to Inuvik) that would be more cost efficient in terms of:

- i) a shorter length with flatter terrain meaning fewer hills, creeks, rivers and corners;
- ii) a shorter environmental assessment;
- iii) lower construction and long-term maintenance; and
- iv) expropriation of less Gwich'in Settlement Lands (as per chapter 23 of the *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*).

I pointed out my concerns and anxiety that all of the four proposed routes from Fort Good Hope to pre-selected points along the Dempster Highway towards Inuvik would pass through a traditional land-use area (Dene Nation map attached on page 4) which is:

- a) of cultural importance and significance to the Gwichya Gwich'in (my late grandfather Chief Paul Niditchie used that area on his way to Sitigi Lake and Anderson River as did my late parents Napoleon and Annie Norbert at Travaillant Lake); and
- b) environmentally sensitive with a herd of scattered musk-ox that should be designated as an **Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area** with co-management by one or more of the Tsiigehtchic organizations until assumed by a future Gwichya Gwich'in government.

Option 5 will save money that could be used towards the building of envisioned bridges at Fort Good Hope, Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson. Option 5 is Doing Things Right!' by advocating for a corridor that is shorter; that does not destroy a cultural and environmental sensitive area; and that brings economic opportunities to Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson directly and in co-partnership with Inuvik.

The following points have been adapted and paraphrased from the webpage of the federal Major Projects Office that made promises of benefits from the highway:



- an envisioned and seriously needed fulltime police detachment in Tsiigehtchic to address law enforcement (including highway patrol), emergency response, and that will help renew our mutual relationship with the RCMP and the court system;
- an envisioned and critically needed community health centre staffed by community health nurses to provide year-round medical access and emergency response;
- an envisioned airport to enhance Northern sovereignty and security through emergency response, connectivity between National Defence locations and facilities plus re-activation of our Canadian Rangers Patrol Group (Tsiigehtchic Patrol and Junior Rangers), regional wildfire operations, and shared local search-and-rescue / recovery efforts;
- a weather or marine weather station to provide safety and reliability of up-to-date information for tourists and the transportation system in the face of climate change and extreme weather;
- a vision of one bridge at Fort Good Hope, two bridges at Tsiigehtchic and one at Fort McPherson (8 Miles crossing) to eliminate the reliance on seasonal ferry operations and winter ice bridges, and that will stabilize the cost of living by improving year-round transportation access and the reliability of community resupply (especially during severe storms, high water, river freeze-up and break-up);
- potential mineral and resource exploration and development activity up the Arctic Red River region as evidenced by archived oil company reports and anecdotal recollections by our Elders and former local oil company workers;
- new tourism potential (after dipping their dust-covered toes in the Arctic Ocean) by creating a scenic driving loop in combination with the Dempster Highway; and
- new inter-territorial educational, cultural and sports opportunities for our Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson youth and students in the Sahtu and Dehcho regions; to name a few envisioned benefits.

If any of the other four route options are chosen, will the federal and territorial governments now proclaim that those benefits are not promised to Tsiigehtchic? Are they only for communities from Fort Simpson to Inuvik only? Are we forever not to have a police presence? Or a fully-staffed health centre? Or the reliability of community resupply for Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson?

More importantly, the exclusion of Option 5 would extinguish a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Tsiigehtchic to finally become an equal and equitable partner in any such major project that potentially could lead to long-term economic self-sufficiency by which Tsiigehtchic could address social problems and community infrastructure.

If indeed the highway is designated as a project of national interest, than Canada should and must coordinate and structure federal financing for the construction of one bridge across the Mackenzie River above Fort Good Hope, one across the Mackenzie River above Tsiigehtchic, one across the Arctic Red River at Tsiigehtchic, and one across the Peel River above Fort McPherson.



However, should a route other than Option 5 be selected, than a recommendation from the MVEIRP for the Office of the Prime Minister and/or Office of Major Projects(Canada) to commit to advance the interests of the people of Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson and the Gwich'in People by constructing the two bridges at Tsiigehtchic and one at Fort McPherson within ten (10) years of the highway completion.

Option 5: *bridging* environmental impacts for cultures and generations...

Respectfully submitted,

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