



August 25, 2026

EA1213-02

Note to File

To all parties:

Re: Mackenzie Valley Highway - Report on MVEIRB staff participation in GNWT's engagement on the project's geographic scope change

1. Introduction

In July and August 2026, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Major Project Office (MPO) conducted engagement on the proposed new corridor for the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Initially proposed to run from Wrigley to Norman Wells in 2014, the proposed corridor now extends to the Dempster Highway, near Inuvik.

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (Review Board) attended these meetings. This note to file summarizes what the Review Board heard. The GNWT is preparing detailed meeting reports, which, upon receipt, the Review Board will post to the Registry.

2. GNWT's objective

GNWT's intent was to gather feedback on the potential extension of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway corridor from Norman Wells to a location on the Dempster Highway, near Inuvik. GNWT gathered comments, concerns, and advice on the route corridor.

3. MPO's objective

MPO's objective was to consult on whether the Mackenzie Valley Highway should be listed as a project of national interest. MPO assesses projects against [five factors outlined in the *Building Canada Act*](#), including the extent to which the project can:

- strengthen Canada's autonomy, resilience and security
- provide economic or other benefits to Canada
- have a high likelihood of successful execution
- advance the interests of Indigenous Peoples
- contribute to clean growth and to Canada's objectives with respect to climate change



4. The Review Board's objective

Review Board staff attended to answer questions about EA and regulatory processes, and hear comments and concerns from parties.

5. Communities visited

Region	Community	Groups	Date
Gwich'in	Aklavik	Aklavik Indian Band	July 6, 2026
		Ehdiitat Gwich'in Council	
		community	
	Inuvik	Inuvik Native Band	July 7, 2026
		Town of Inuvik	
	Tsiigehtchic	Gwichya Gwich'in Council	July 8, 2026
		Community	
Sahtú	Colville Lake	Behdza Ahdi First Nation Band	August 4, 2026
		Ayoni Keh land Corporation	
	Tulit'a	Tulit'a Dene Band	August 5, 2026
		Hamlet of Tulit'a	
		Tulit'a District Land Corporation	
		Tulit'a Land Corporation	
		Community	
	Fort Good Hope	Fort Norman Metis	August 18, 2026 - Online
		Fort Good Hope Metis Local 54 Land Corporation	August 12, 2026
		Community	
		Yamoga Land Corporation	August 13, 2026
		Charter Community of K'asho Got'ine	

6. What we heard

Some of the topics that the Review Board heard from parties and the developer are as follows:

- **Comments and questions about the route**
 - **avoid important fishing lakes** along the north end of the route; the GNWT should look at other options that would connect along the Dempster closer to Tsiigehtchic or between Tsiigehtchic and Inuvik.
 - **routing north of Little Chicago**



- **Great Bear Rock re-route**
- **Issues raised:**
 - **Employment** – need for local training (in advance) and employment
 - **Safety** – need more RCMP detachments in communities
 - **Caribou and moose** – concerns about impacts to habitat. Suggested solution: wildlife crossings. Questions about harvesting restrictions.
 - **Drugs** – need to find solutions *before* the highway is in
 - **Water** – concerns about water quality and risks from spills
 - **Fish** – concerns about impacts near big lakes (like Travaillant Lake) and impacts from bridge construction. Questions about possible fishing restrictions.
 - **Dust** – concerns about impacts on vegetation
 - **Emergency** – need for better emergency responses. Suggestions:
 - cell tower for cell service
 - pullouts
 - emergency phones in rest stops
 - emergency runways
 - emergency shelters (shacks)
 - **Climate change** – its impacts must be considered in the project design
- **Communities had questions about:**
 - **bridge** locations and width
 - **ferries vs bridges** – GNWT indicated there will be bridges and no ferries
 - **funding** available to relieve new pressures on infrastructure and services
 - **how contracting** will work (one or multiple contractors)
 - **the change of scope:**
 - Consultation
 - EA process
 - the working groups
 - land ownership and rights
 - project timelines





- **Communities want:**
 - **Indigenous Traditional Knowledge** incorporated into decision-making regarding the routing and road design
 - **monitoring** and **funding** to mitigate long-term impacts.
 - to have a say in **procurement policies**
 - community **control and benefits**
 - appropriate **mitigations**
 - **to be updated about EA and construction timelines** (suggestion: have a community liaison)
 - **the highway built the right way**

7. Questions?

For questions or more information, please contact Senior Environmental Assessment Advisor Catherine Fairbairn at cfairbairn@reviewboard.ca or 867-766-7054, and Environmental Assessment Advisor Clémentine Bouche at cbouche@reviewboard.ca or 867-766-7051.