



CAMBRIDGE BAY, NU – FEBRUARY 10, 2017

LAUNCH OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IN DAVIS STRAIT AND BAFFIN BAY

Following a referral from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) received on February 9, 2017, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB or Board) is initiating a Strategic Environment Assessment in Baffin Bay and Davis Strait (the SEA). Previously, INAC had commenced an SEA to support the Minister's decision-making on whether companies could be invited to bid on parcels of land for oil and gas exploration licences in the Canadian waters of Davis Strait and Baffin Bay. Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) had requested that the NIRB be directly involved, given the Board's extensive experience leading project-specific assessments in Nunavut. After considerable discussion with the NIRB and representatives from NTI, QIA and the Government of Nunavut, INAC has formally referred this important initiative to the Board pursuant to section 12.2.24 of the Nunavut Agreement. The NIRB will be responsible for coordinating the SEA, including considering previously-collected information and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, facilitating public engagement and submitting a final report to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs by March 2019 for consideration regarding future development of oil and gas related activities in the region.

Unlike project-specific assessments undertaken by the NIRB, the SEA will not be focused on a proposed development project but, instead, will identify the types of oil and gas development activities that could be proposed for Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, evaluate existing information, and examine issues associated with possible development types. The final report produced by the NIRB at the conclusion of the SEA will be provided to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs for consideration and will inform the 5-year review of the Government of Canada decision to designate Canadian Arctic waters as off limits to future oil and gas licences. The SEA will incorporate available scientific information, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and public feedback regarding the potential for positive and negative effects on the physical environment and communities if different types of oil and gas development and activities were to occur within Baffin Bay and Davis Strait.

The SEA will consist of three (3) general phases: issues scoping, analysis of potential development scenarios, and development of a final SEA report and associated recommendations. Throughout each of these phases available information will be collected and considered as relates to: the existing physical and human environment comprising the study area; historic oil and gas activities in the NSA, Baffin Bay, and Davis Strait; possible offshore oil and gas activities and development scenarios; and potential exosystemic and socio-economic effects associated with oil and gas development activities. This information will be used to develop an improved understanding of potential types of oil and gas-related development that could one day be proposed for Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, their associated risks and

management strategies. Gaps in currently available knowledge and information, and opportunities for further study will also be identified.

Through each phase of the SEA the NIRB will schedule public engagement sessions in each of the communities surrounding Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, including Resolute Bay, Grise Fiord, Arctic Bay, Pond Inlet, Clyde River, Qikiqtarjuaq, Pangnirtung, Iqaluit, Kimmirut and Cape Dorset. Engagement is also planned to occur with transboundary groups and organizations located outside the NSA, with the added objective of learning lessons from other Arctic areas which have had experience with oil and gas development to date. Initial public engagement meetings will be scheduled in Nunavut communities in the coming months to introduce the SEA and communicate the planned opportunities for involvement. This will be followed by additional public scoping sessions in the Fall of 2017 to provide opportunities for community members to provide input into the final scope of the SEA and to share feedback and information to further support the assessment.

Throughout the SEA, focus will be placed on providing opportunities for the public to inform the assessment and also learn about oil and gas development, including associated current practices, potential positive and negative effects, and mitigation measures. During the final phase of the SEA, a final public meeting and community roundtable will be facilitated by the NIRB in Iqaluit. Community representatives from each of the potentially affected communities will be invited to attend and participate in the meeting and given opportunities to provide feedback directly to the board members of the NIRB before the final report is issued.

To ensure an effective SEA which results in a comprehensive final report, the NIRB intends to continue working closely with INAC, NTI, QIA, and the GN regarding the focus of the SEA, as well as with other government departments, industry, non-governmental organizations, potentially affected communities, and the general public. The NIRB is currently developing a dedicated online registry for the SEA which, once launched in the coming weeks, will allow for full public access to all SEA related documentation throughout the assessment.

The NIRB looks forward to providing further direction on next steps and the scheduling of initial public engagement meetings in the days to come!

For media inquiries please contact:

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FEB 02 2017



Ms. Elizabeth Copland
Chairperson
Nunavut Impact Review Board
29 Mitik Street, PO Box 1360
CAMBRIDGE BAY NU X0B 0C0

Dear Ms. Copland:

I am pleased to announce that Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada is undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment in Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, which will be a key consideration in the 5-year review of the Government of Canada decision to designate Canadian Arctic waters as off limits to future oil and gas licences, announced in the United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement on December 20, 2016.

In previous correspondence, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated have asked that the Government consent to the Nunavut Impact Review Board's participation in the Strategic Environmental Assessment. I want to thank you for taking the time to work with our department's staff to explore options for the Board's role in this important initiative.

As per Section 12.2.4 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, I formally request the Nunavut Impact Review Board draft the Strategic Environmental Assessment and coordinate the process. Departmental staff will assist the Board in reviewing the scope and developing terms of reference, as well as at other critical stages, such as the review of the initiative's findings and recommendations. We request that the Board complete this work by March 2019.

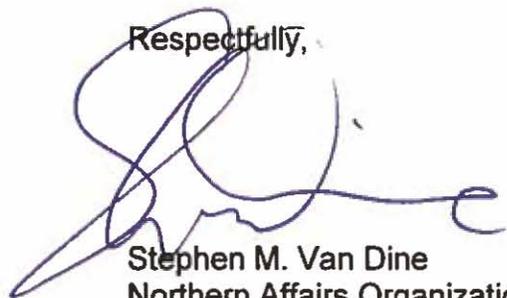
We understand that the Strategic Environmental Assessment will rely on both traditional knowledge and scientific information to consider potential interactions of oil and gas activities with the natural and social environment in the region. We have heard, and we agree, that Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit is an essential component of strategic considerations related to long-term sustainable resource development and conservation planning in the region. We request that the Nunavut Impact Review Board integrate Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit work conducted by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, as well as provide opportunities for all stakeholders, with a strong emphasis on meaningful community engagement, to ask questions,

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share concerns, and present observations and research to inform recommendations, as the Board would in its project-specific environmental assessments.

For further information, please contact Michel Chenier, Acting Director, Environment and Renewable Resources, at Michel.Chenier@aadnc-aandc.gc.ca or (819) 934-9181.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Van Dine', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen M. Van Dine
Northern Affairs Organization

Encl.

c.c.: Mr. Pauloosie Akeeagok
Ms. Aluki Kotierk
Mr. Andrew Nakashuk
Mr. Jason Akearok
Mr. Thomas Kabloona
The Honourable Monica Eil-Kanayuk
The Honourable Johnny Mike