



The Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline: Past Environmental and Socio-economic Reviews

- In the early 1970s, Canada and the United States began contemplating major pipelines designed to transport Alaskan and northern Canadian gas to southern markets.
- A Commission of Inquiry led by Justice Thomas Berger (the Berger Inquiry) was appointed to study the impacts of running a pipeline up the Mackenzie Valley. In 1977, Justice Berger concluded that no route through northern Yukon would be environmentally acceptable and recommended delaying a Mackenzie Valley route for 10 years. He also determined that a southern Yukon route would be acceptable.
- In 1976, the National Energy Board (NEB) received applications for various northern pipeline projects, including the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline (the Pipeline) proposed by Foothills Pipe Lines Ltd. (Foothills) through Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan into southern markets. In July 1977, after 214 days of hearings, the NEB found that the Foothills project, although requiring further engineering design, environmental and socio-economic information, offered the generally preferred route for transporting Alaska natural gas.
- Also in 1977, the Lysyk Inquiry studied the socio-economic impacts of the Pipeline proposal, holding hearings in 17 Yukon communities over 51 days. Mr. Lysyk's report made several specific recommendations to minimize any potentially negative impacts.
- The Mair Inquiry was appointed in 1979 to study potential socio-economic impacts in British Columbia. Mr. Mair held hearings in 15 communities and issued a report recommending several specific mitigative measures.
- Foothills' 1976 application for a right-of-way through southern Yukon had in the meantime triggered a federal Environmental Assessment and Review Panel (EARP). The panel met intermittently between 1977 and 1982:
 - In 1977, the panel issued an interim report affirming preference for a southern Yukon route and requesting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) from Foothills. The panel also recommended a single mechanism for coordinating design and environmental approvals.
 - In 1979, after Foothills submitted an EIS for the southern Yukon portion of the project, the panel held public hearings in nine Yukon communities. The panel concluded that insufficient information had been filed.



- Between 1979 and 1981, the Northern Pipeline Agency participated in assessment activities, consulting with governments, public interest groups and communities to develop socio-economic and environmental terms and conditions. Also, in 1981, the panel reconvened to address additional information submitted by Foothills, specifically regarding the routing in the Whitehorse and Ibex Pass areas of Yukon.
- In 1982, Foothills submitted additional addenda to the EIS. The panel held public hearings in Whitehorse and submitted its final report, concluding that the Pipeline could be constructed and operated in an environmentally acceptable manner.

For more information

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