



# Sahtu Land Use Planning Board

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## OPENING COMMENTS

(Delivered by SLUPB Chair)

Welcome. After 15 years, and close to \$10 million dollars, we're in the home stretch!

The Board has invited all of you to this meeting so that it can hear from the key parties – the approving parties, the Sahtu District land corporations and the land and water board, the key regulatory body - to have a final discussion around outstanding issues, and to build consensus around how to resolve those issues wherever possible. The Board wants to have a clear understanding of the Parties interests and constraints so that it can draft a Final Plan acceptable to the Parties and one that meets the needs and aspirations of the residents of the Sahtu.

The Board has been developing this Plan for over 15 years. Given new development pressures occurring in the region, I think we can all agree that it is time to get the Plan done. Numerous reports in recent years, including Neil McCrank's Report and the most recent NWT Environmental Audit have stressed the need to complete and approve effective land use plans as soon as possible. Over the last year we've heard numerous times that we need to complete it quickly, implement it and learn from it. We all have a role to play in bringing this process to a timely conclusion; this meeting is the final opportunity for the parties gathered here to meet collectively in a joint effort to reach that goal.

It's important that the Final Plan be acceptable to the parties here. No one wants to see the Plan caught in another cycle of revisions during the approval process. However, it must be emphasized that no one party will get everything it wants. Each party must focus on its core interests and constraints, listen carefully to those of the other parties, and look for the common ground amongst all our interests if we are to conclude this process soon.

First and foremost, we need to make sure that the Plan "protects and promotes the social, cultural and economic well-being of residents and communities of the Sahtu Settlement Area, having regard to the interests of all Canadians", as set out in the Sahtu Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. This is also a central tenet in land use planning – that planning is for the residents and communities, as they are the ones who are most affected by land use decisions. We need to bear this in mind at all times. After all, it is in their backyards that this Plan will have the most meaning, the most effect and the most benefit.

Let's also not forget that Neil McCrank's recommendations were based on the assumption that there would be effective land use plans. He made that his number 1 recommendation. He viewed land use plans as a key window for integrating local input into regulatory decisions. Given the ongoing efforts to merge the land and water boards, the Plan will become even more important as a source of community input. But to be truly effective, the Plan must meet community needs – and in the past year the communities in particular have compromised time and time again. We need to be particularly careful during final revisions that we do not go so far that we remove the community voice from the Plan.



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Good planning just makes good business sense. Land use planning is intended to bring clarity and consistency to the regulatory process by spelling out where and how development should proceed. An effective Plan will streamline the regulatory process because everyone can see from the beginning, the rules and expectations within which they have to operate, and they can plan their activities accordingly.

This won't be a perfect plan. A perfect plan, quite simply, is an impossible goal. But it must be – and certainly can be – an effective plan. There is sufficient flexibility in the Land Claim Agreement and the draft Plan to allow for change if and as required. There's a requirement for a complete review of the plan every five years. Amendments to the plan can be made at any time, should the need arise. The Board has the ability to grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis. And over the past year, we've collectively incorporated flexibility into many of the Plan's conditions where that is required.

This meeting is key to helping us – all of us – create an effective land use plan that will meet the needs and aspirations of the residents of the Sahtu, and meet the mandates of the respective levels of government – SSI, the GNWT, the federal government. It is my hope, the Board's hope, and I think the hope of everyone here, that over the next two days we will come together on the remaining outstanding issues in the draft Plan.

That said, consensus is a goal of this meeting, not a requirement. The Board holds the pen and is responsible for drafting the Plan. The Parties need to provide the board with clear guidance on their expectations, and to provide the Board with the information and context it requires, but then step back and enable the Board do its job. Where consensus is not reached, the Board will do its best to balance the Parties' interests while ensuring that the Plan fulfills its purpose. The stronger the consensus, the less guess work there is for all of us.

It is also the Board's responsibility to run a fair process. To that end, the Board has previously said that it will not discuss new issues or comments at this meeting. The workshops provided the space for broad discussion on the Plan, where all parties were represented. That time has now passed. New comments, such as AANDC's request to delete CR #13 (Closure and Reclamation) or remove many of the Recommendations from the Plan will not be given time on the agenda. AANDC had raised issues with a few of the Recommendations previously, which the Board will consider. Recommendations are included at the end of the agenda, time permitting, should AANDC wish to speak to their previous comments on that item.

As I mentioned, consensus is the goal of this meeting, but it is not a requirement. We will keep the meeting format as informal as possible to encourage collaborative discussions amongst the parties. We will explore potential solutions during the meeting, as much as our time constraints allow, and we encourage the parties to use the breaks and lunch periods to continue talking and to bring ideas back to the table.

I must stress that the Board will not be making any decisions or firm commitments during this meeting. We hope to achieve consensus here, consensus that will be built into the final Plan, but the Board will need to go back and review all the comments it has received since Draft 3 was released, and view the public record in its entirety before it finalizes the Plan. The Board will carefully consider all arguments and interests, but in the end it is the Board's responsibility,



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its mandate and its challenge to develop a solution that in its view best meets the needs of all parties.

David will be facilitating discussions for the meeting and tracking key points on the flipchart to assist us. We are using microphones to ensure we can all hear each other and the meeting is being recorded so the Board has an accurate record of discussions to refer to later. The Board will transcribe the entire meeting to ensure it has an accurate record of what was said and it will make publicly available a summary record of the meeting.

For each topic of discussion, the Board will open the discussion by setting the context and framing the questions to be discussed. The approving parties will be asked to briefly share their perspectives. After that, we will have a focused discussion to explore possible solutions. If we get stuck, we will put the issue in a parking lot for the Board's further consideration. If time permits we will revisit those outstanding issues tomorrow afternoon. But as I've said, this is not a decision-making meeting in the formal sense. The Board will reserve judgment on all issues and will do its very best to arrive at a solution that it believes all parties can live with.