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June 17th, 2014

Enbridge: Northern BC Communities Push for Shift in Focus

PRINCE GEORGE, BC – The President of the North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) is urging a shift in focus as observers wait to hear the fate of Enbridge’s Northern Gateway project. “For those of us who feel the effects of this kind of development most - the people who actually live and work in the region - the focus should be on capacity,” says Brian Frenkel, the organization’s newly elected President.

The NCLGA (The Elected Voice of Central and Northern BC) represents 70% of BC’s landmass. According to the association’s website, recent multi-billion dollar energy and mining projects make their region, per capita, one of the most heavily invested areas in North America. “It is important to understand that Northern Gateway is just one of a multitude of projects proposed for our region,” continued Frenkel. “From mining to LNG, and hydro-electric projects to the shipment of raw crude oil, the pace of development in the region has increased exponentially over the past few years.”

“Yes, it’s important to have a robust and thorough vetting of each project, but we need to look at the larger picture. If only half the proposed projects in northern BC get the green light, it will still be a real struggle for our communities to deal with the increased load on our emergency services, medical clinics, roads, highways... and the list goes on. There are significant side effects of rapid economic growth, and we first have to make sure we have the capacity to deal with those before we can truly harness the opportunities that growth provides,” says Frenkel.

The NCLGA has not taken an official stand on Northern Gateway. “I won’t get into specific projects, says Frenkel, “but I will say that we welcome economic investment wholeheartedly; quite frankly, we need that investment to grow our communities in a healthy and sustainable way. We are absolutely willing to work with senior levels of government to make sure responsible resource development flourishes here, but we need to see some real signs that they are committed to building capacity in the region.”

Capacity building priorities in the region, according to Frenkel, include emergency services, transportation infrastructure, broadband communications and revenue sharing.

At their Annual General Meeting this past May, all 41 communities in BC’s north central region ratified 34 resolutions. From issues like RCMP staffing levels to Coastal Ferry service, these resolutions set the NCLGA’s priorities and planning for the coming year.

For a complete list of current and past resolutions, and a list of NCLGA member communities and Board representatives, visit www.nclga.ca

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