

**No 2**

**Public Participation In  
The Canadian Environmental Assessment  
And Review Process**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

**The objective of this paper is to illustrate, by means of four case studies, public participation in the Canadian Environmental Assessment and Review Process.**

**The case studies, involving different development proposals in geographically distinct areas of Canada include a uranium hexafluoride refinery, hydrocarbon exploration in the Arctic, a port expansion and a highway project. In each instance, the public has played a significant role in influencing the development proposal.**

**The examples illustrate how the public has influenced project site selection, effectively questioned the need for a development action and extended investigation of a particular proposal to consideration of resource use in a much broader geographical area. The case studies also illustrate the flexibility of the Environmental Assessment and Review Process in allowing for wide citizen participation in different geographical regions and adjusting to accommodate changing needs.**

## **II. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW PROCESS AND THE PUBLIC**

**The Canadian Environmental Assessment and Review Process is based on a firm agreement by ministers of the Federal Government that they will be responsible for the environmental consequences of activities proposed by their departments including the incorporation of suitable mitigating measures. It is not a legal instrument and consequently the public does not have the option of recourse to the courts.**

**The process is essentially based on a self-assessment approach in which departments and agencies are responsible for determining the environmental consequences of their own programs, projects and**

activities and deciding upon the environmental significance of the anticipated effects. In order to ensure early public input in the process, the Federal Cabinet has directed that information be provided and public response sought early in the planning stage before vital decisions are taken that may be difficult to alter regardless of public opinion. When an activity is deemed by the Federal initiator or sponsor to have a potentially significant environmental impact, it is referred to the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office for a formal review by an Environmental Assessment Panel. The Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office is responsible for the establishment of Environmental Assessment Panels to review referred projects and for provision of secretariat support to the Panels.

The Panel is an independent group of experts (usually four to six) having a mandate to review the environmental consequences of a specific project or activity and to report its findings to the Minister. The case studies presented in section III illustrate projects that were reviewed by various Panels.

Provision of information to the public and public participation is central to the Panel phase of the Environmental Assessment and Review Process. It is recognized that the public has an important role in determining the environmental significance of a development action. After a Panel is formed, one of its first tasks is to issue guidelines to the proponent for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Public input on the guidelines may be solicited at this point by inviting written and oral comments or by convening public meetings. Guidelines are made public at the same time they are forwarded to the proponent. Once the Environmental Impact Statement is completed, and after allowing sufficient time for public and government review, the Panel holds public meetings to receive comments on the Environmental Impact Statement and on the project. These are normally held in the immediate area of the project.

Very early in the review process, Panel staff undertake an information program to inform the public of the nature of the review and to ensure that the public is provided with adequate opportunity to review and comment on the project. Once the Environmental Impact Statement is available, it is sent to interested parties and government agencies well in advance of public meetings. Written comments on the project are solicited and these also receive wide distribution prior to the hearings. Advertisements are placed periodically in the media advising the public of progress of and procedures for the review, location of viewing centres (libraries, government offices) containing information on the project, and finally, the time and location of public meetings. Public meetings may be conducted at various stages in the process. They may be held to receive comment on the guidelines, to review and determine any major deficiencies in the Environmental Impact Statement and, when it is considered that sufficient information is available to allow the Panel to reach its conclusion, to receive final comment on the project. The proponent is also encouraged to conduct an information program in order to acquaint the public with the implications of the proposal.

Environmental Assessment Panel meetings are not legal proceedings. Rules of evidence normally followed by commissions of enquiry or other tribunals do not apply, although each Panel issues procedures for the conduct of its meetings. Panel meetings are normally structured so as to provide the greatest opportunity for an individual or group to express opinions or provide information on the potential impact of the proposal. Panel staff are available before and during meetings to assist anyone wishing to participate in such reviews. Thus at public meetings, both facts and opinions from technical experts and individual members of the public are heard by the Panel.

Upon completion of its deliberations, the Panel prepares its report to the Minister of the Environment outlining its recommendations on whether a project should proceed. The report of the Panel is normally released to the public shortly after it is submitted to the Minister. Decisions on the Panel's recommendations are made by the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of the initiating or sponsoring department.

### III. CASE STUDIES

#### 1. Proposal for a Uranium Hexafluoride Refinery

This case study provides an illustration of the ability of the public to influence a development proposal and to have an involvement in site selection.

In 1975, Eldorado Nuclear Ltd., a Canadian Crown Corporation, proposed to construct a uranium hexafluoride refinery in the Province of Ontario. The Environmental Assessment Panel's mandate was to review potential environmental and socio-economic and community impacts of the project.

##### 1.1 The Port Granby Review

In June 1976, guidelines for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement were issued to Eldorado and made public. The Company examined fourteen potential sites over a two-year period and announced in January 1977 that Port Granby (near Port Hope) was the most attractive location. In June 1977, the Environmental Impact Statement for the Port Granby site was presented to the Panel and made public.

When the Environmental Impact Statement was received, an information and participation program was organized to

provide the public with adequate opportunity to review and comment on the project. Reviews were also carried out by federal and provincial government agencies. In the immediate project area, Eldorado undertook of its own volition, a public communications program to acquaint area residents with the project and its implications. Independent of Eldorado's program panel staff attempted to ensure that the views to be presented to the Panel at the planned meetings would adequately reflect the range of interests and concerns of all interested parties.

Public meetings were conducted in two phases. The first phase of meetings, held in September and October 1977, were designed to identify data deficiencies in the Environmental Impact Statement. After considering all the submissions made by the public and government agencies during the Phase I meetings, the Panel forwarded to Eldorado a list of clarifications required and perceived deficiencies in the Environmental Impact Statement. The list was also made public and sent to all the participants at the meetings. The Eldorado response to the deficiency list, in December 1977, was made public by the Panel and forwarded to the meeting participants together with a list of issues to be discussed in the second phase. The final meetings were held one month later.

During the course of the two phases of meetings, discussion centred on a number of issues. Eldorado planned to locate the new refinery on prime farm land, in a highly productive agricultural area which supported a small local population through market gardening. There was concern expressed as to the effects of the proposed development on the local lifestyle. The subject of the management of low level radioactive wastes was found to

be contentious by the government review agencies and the public. Eldorado proposed a method of on-site disposal that had only undergone limited trial in the United States. Another issue of concern was the potential effects of hydrogen fluoride emissions on community health and on agriculture. In addition, concern was also expressed about the effectiveness of current regulatory control and the adequacy of current monitoring programs.

Following the public meetings, the Panel prepared a report on its findings. The Panel concluded that the refinery itself and the refining processes could be environmentally acceptable on an appropriate site if a number of conditions were met. The Port Granby site, however, was found to be unacceptable. The Panel was concerned about the potential environmental effects of the project as well as its social impact on the Port Granby Community. It was particularly concerned about the intrusion of the refinery as an industrial use into an area where the present and long-term character is rural and favours agriculture. The Panel also rejected Port Granby as the site for the proposed waste management facility.

It was clear that public participation had played an important role in the decision not to locate the proposed Eldorado refinery in Port Granby. The public in its presentations to the Panel were able to effectively demonstrate the impact the refinery might have on local agricultural patterns and community lifestyle. Information that was lacking in the Environment Impact Statement on potential social and community impacts on the local area had been provided by the public. This led the Panel in its final analysis to make a further recommendation that any new proposal should include a

more comprehensive analysis of the anticipated impacts on the local community and evidence that its concerns have been taken into account.

**1.2 The Hope Township (Port Hope), Dill Township (Sudbury), and Blind River Review**

Following the rejection of the Port Granby proposal, Eldorado identified potential sites in each of the Port Hope, Sudbury and Blind River regions of Ontario and requested they be reviewed. The Federal Cabinet agreed in June 1978, that it would make the final choice of a site for the new refinery following completion of the Environmental Assessment Panel's report on these new sites. Eldorado prepared separate Environmental Impact Statements for each location based on the guidelines issued for the Port Granby review and on the results of the public meetings conducted in that area.

These were distributed to the public and government agencies for review approximately two months prior to the public meetings which were held in each of the three areas. Eldorado's new proposal contained more information on the plant processes and operations than the previous Port Granby proposal. In addition, the proposal for management of low-level radioactive wastes was altered considerably.

A public information and participation program similar to the one used in the Port Granby review was re-established by the Panel. A considerable effort was made in the three regions to create an awareness of the Environmental Review Process and to ensure that all persons and organizations having an interest in the project were informed of the hearings, and of the opportunities to make their views known to the Panel.



In keeping with the Panel's recommendation regarding a more comprehensive analysis of the anticipated impacts on the local community, Eldorado undertook a much more intensive public communications program. Eldorado made a greater effort to contact various citizens' committees, formed either in support of or opposed to the proposed project. Information offices were established in each area and numerous neighbourhood meetings were held to acquaint the public with the project implications. The result of this intensive public information program was evident during the Panel meetings. In all three areas, the public was more aware of the nature of the project than had been the case in Port Granby. During the Port Granby review, most people who participated in the meetings were opposed to the project. As a result of Eldorado's revamped information program, participation was more evenly balanced between those who supported and those who opposed the project.

Many of the issues discussed during the Hope Township, Dill Township and Blind River review had been raised at the Port Granby meetings. There were, however, a number of specific issues peculiar to each of the three sites.

In the case of the Hope Township site, since it was within 5 km of the Port Granby site, there was once again concern that the refinery would constitute a major industrial intrusion into an area substantially committed to agriculture. The Panel, however, found the combination of circumstances affecting it to be considerably different and concluded that the proposed refinery would not add to the "development wedge" while other industries that might locate on the site could do so. During the Dill Township meetings many of the citizens living adjacent to the proposed site voiced

their objection to this location. Their major concern was that the proposed refinery would increase developmental pressures in the area, thereby altering the rural character of the area which consists of scattered residential development and a number of small farms. The Panel felt, however, that any adverse impacts of the refinery would be less than that feared by the residents. In Blind River, there was considerable discussion of the socio-economic effects of the refinery on the small community. Local citizens presented information to augment that provided in the Environmental Impact Statement and show the positive socio-economic benefits of the refinery locating in that area.

In conclusion, the Panel's recommendations, which were subsequently endorsed by the Minister of Environment were that all three sites were acceptable for the refinery if certain conditions were met. One of the conditions, which would ensure continuing participation in both construction and operation of the proposed refinery, was the formation of a Citizens' Monitoring Committee. Regardless of the refinery location, the Panel gave strong support to the creation of such a Committee whose purposes would be to provide for information dissemination of the monitoring results of the industry and regulatory agencies, to increase industry/regulatory agency accountability and to facilitate ready access to Eldorado management by members of the local community. This Committee which would be unique in Canada would be composed of the main interest groups in the local community; government agencies would participate only as observers.

Not only had the public played a role in selecting a site for the refinery, public participation had resulted in

substantial changes to the original development proposal and had ensured that there would be continuing public involvement in the plant operations by means of a Citizen's Monitoring Committee. In the process, both the Company and government agencies had learned a lot about the value of public participation in decision-making.

## **2. Proposal for Hydrocarbon Exploration in Lancaster Sound**

This project illustrates how a very specific proposal led to the consideration of resource use in a much broader geographical area. The procedures for environmental impact assessment review were influenced by wide citizen participation in geographical terms and by cultural diversity among the participants. Considerable emphasis was placed on the socio-economic impact of the project.

In 1977 the Federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the initiating department, requested that an environmental impact assessment review be undertaken on a proposal by Norlands Petroleum Ltd. to drill one exploratory well in Lancaster Sound. It also requested that consideration be given to regional clearance for other exploratory drilling proposals at the same time.

Lancaster Sound is located in the Canadian Arctic, north of Baffin Island. It is the entrance to the Northwest Passage and hence is a migratory path and living area for marine mammals and birds as well as a transportation artery. It is also a very important nesting area for significant colonies of many species of birds.

Guidelines for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement were issued to Norlands in March, 1978 and made public. The Environmental Impact Statement was submitted to

the Panel in July 1978 for public and government agency review.

Prior to the receipt of the Environmental Impact Statement, Panel staff visited the four potentially affected Inuit settlements in the area to meet the public and explain the review process. It became apparent that socio-economic matters were closely linked to environmental issues. The Inuit live in harmony with their environment and in spite of developmental pressures, have maintained close cultural ties to the land. The harvest from hunting and fishing provides an important nutritional balance to their diet and is significant to the local economy. The scope of the review was expanded, therefore, to consider both socio-economic and environmental matters.

Norlands' public information program was limited to a few community visits. In general, residents felt that Norlands had not discussed the proposal with them to the extent they considered necessary.

In order to hear the views of the residents of the potentially affected communities, the Panel visited each settlement in October 1978. To further the Panel's understanding of northern conditions and with the active support of the community councils, arrangements were made for the Panel members to live with Inuit families, while in two of the settlements, and to participate in local activities. By means of this direct contact between the Inuit and Panel members, many local people, who might have been reluctant to address the Panel in a more formal setting, made their views known. General and more structured meetings were held at the end of October in Pond Inlet to receive input from government agencies, public interest groups as well as from local residents. Due to great concern amongst the local people that

they had insufficient time to adequately prepare for and made presentations at the meetings, it was agreed to hold a second phase a month later. The second phase was intended to permit a more detailed examination of issues raised at the October meetings.

During the course of the community visits and structured meetings many issues of a very broad nature were raised. It was pointed out that the secondary effects which would result from oil and gas production, in the event of a hydrocarbon discovery, would be far greater than the initial exploratory well. The lack of coordination of government policies relating to the area was of concern; potentially conflicting uses of Lancaster Sound were identified which varied from hydrocarbon exploration to preservation of the area as a national park. Canada's international treaty obligations to protect polar bears and migratory birds were also cited. In addition, there was considerable discussion on the potential socio-economic impact of the project on the Inuit people. There was concern that the proposed drilling project could affect traditional uses of Lancaster Sound for transportation and as source of food supply. Inuit spokesman also emphasized the importance of settling the issue of land claims. They felt that a premature decision on drilling would stall negotiations which were underway.

Given the importance of these issues, it was evident that the Panel could not restrict its review to one exploratory well. In fact, acceptance of the Panel by the local people as an effective vehicle for consultation was predicated on the expectation that the Panel would take into account the whole spectrum of public concerns in its deliberations.

During the course of its review, the Panel listened to the concerns of the Inuit and considered potential physical,

biological and socio-economic impacts of the project. The Panel concluded, that Norlands was not sufficiently prepared to undertake the proposed drilling in 1979 in a safe manner and with minimum risk to the environment. It also recommended that the whole resource use question of Lancaster Sound should be examined before determining whether any drilling should be allowed in that area. In this regard, the Panel further recommended that any future request for regional clearance should be supported by a comprehensive regional assessment. These conclusions and recommendations were accepted by the Minister of the Environment.

### **3. Proposal for a Port Expansion**

This case study provides an example of how the public was able to influence the Panel's recommendations concerning the magnitude of a proposed development.

In 1975, the National Harbours Board proposed to expand the existing Roberts Bank port facility, near Vancouver, by adding up to 110 hectares through the addition of four new terminal areas and an administrative area. There would also be a widening of the causeway and an increase in the size of the ship berthing channel, including the addition of a ship turning basin. The expansion was proposed to meet future west coast terminal requirements to handle sulphur, potash, grain, bulk liquids and increased coal exports.

The existing facility consists of a twenty hectare terminal located within the ecologically important Fraser River estuary. The Roberts Bank ecosystem is characterized by a variety of important habitat types. Notable among these are extensive beds of eelgrass which support populations of varied estuarine life forms including fish, crabs and birds.

**Guidelines for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement were published in March 1976 and made public. The Environmental Impact Statement was prepared by the proponent in October 1977 and submitted to public and government agency review. On the basis of written submissions received from the public and government agencies on the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement, the Panel issued a statement of deficiencies to the proponent. In June 1978, supplementary information was received in response to the deficiency statement. This information was given wide public distribution and, along with the Environmental Impact Statement, served as the basis for a further public review of the major aspects of the project. The final review consisted of public meetings, held in late October and early November 1978.**

**Throughout the public review of the port expansion proposal, especially at the meetings, the Panel heard concerns expressed by many individuals, groups and agencies on a wide variety of issues. The main ecological concerns were the impacts of port expansion on salmonoid, crab and waterfowl habitat. The major social/community issues raised were the effects of train noise and the possible use of adjacent lands for port related industrial development.**

**The Panel was critical of the lack of information in the Environmental Impact Statement on the analysis of social impact. Public input during the meetings allowed the Panel to develop a better understanding of the local concerns in this regard.**

**There was also considerable discussion on the question of project justification. The main support for the proposal originated from industry, however, not all industrial sectors were in favour of the port expansion and some agreed that**

there was no demonstrated need for expansion at Roberts Bank other than for the shipment of coal.

Following the public meetings, the Panel concluded that proposed expansion of the Roberts Bank port, should not be permitted to proceed. The Panel felt that extensive development of the kind proposed by National Harbours Board would have too great an impact on the Fraser River estuary. While their conclusion was largely based on environmental grounds, there were other issues considered as well. The Panel was not satisfied that a need had been adequately demonstrated for an additional facility to export commodities such as sulphur, potash, grain and bulk liquids. The Panel also felt that information on social impacts, while generally inadequate and inconclusive, gave rise to concerns related to a number of potentially affected groups if the full expansion were to proceed.

At the same time, however, the Panel did not recommend that further development should be stopped. It recognized that the area of the proposed expansion was not of uniform ecological value or sensitivity and therefore it recommended that, instead of a 110 hectares expansion to handle various commodities, limited expansion of 40 hectares could be tolerated for coal export facilities. This was not a case of making trade-offs between development and environmental damage, but of restricting development to an area, and under conditions, where environmental impacts were at their least. The Panel felt that adverse environmental impacts associated with reduced expansion could be kept to tolerable levels if a number of mitigation measures were implemented. A number of the measures recommended by the Panel related to social/community concerns raised by the public in the course of the review process.



Public participation played an important role in influencing the Panel's decision and hence in shaping future development, if any, at the Roberts Bank port. In addition, as a direct result of the public review process, certain deficiencies relating to the operation of the existing port were identified and recommendations were made for corrective action.

Furthermore, as a result of the extensive discussion by the public on the basic need for the project, the Panel made a general recommendation that it should be incumbent upon the proponent to publicly demonstrate the need for a development prior to the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement.

#### **4. Shakwak Highway Project**

This case study provides an illustration of public participation in a project covering a wide geographical area. It also provides an example of a flexible environmental assessment review process, capable of dealing with a project subject to an International Agreement between Canada and the United States.

The project proposal involved the paving and upgrading of the Haines Road from the Alaska/British Columbia border to Haines Junction, and the Alaska Highway from Haines Junction to the Yukon/Alaska border, a distance of approximately 520 km. An International Agreement between Canada and the United States provides that, pending appropriate environmental clearances, the United States would pay for the construction of the project and would direct construction efforts. Since United States funds were involved, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration was also required by U.S. law to conduct an environmental assessment of the project.

The Highway would involve construction in one of Canada's most beautiful regions. It is an area in which wildlife abounds

and is relatively undisturbed. There are also specific physical characteristics in the region, such as continuous and discontinuous permafrost, that if disturbed, could lead to significant environmental damage. The lifestyle of the people living in the four communities along the proposed route is unique. The infrastructure of the area is presently undeveloped and the main economic support of the communities is derived from tourism. There is also a substantial native population along the route. Another factor requiring consideration in the review was the planned building of the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline which would create a substantial cumulative impact along that portion of the route from Haines Junction to the Alaska border.

As in the previous case studies, the Panel made the Environmental Impact Statement widely available to the public and sought reviews of the project from government agencies. Guidelines for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement were issued by the Panel in March 1976. Due to the non-site specific nature of the project, a different approach to public participation was required. Each Environmental Assessment Panel attempts to structure hearings to suit the expectations and level of awareness of the public in the area. In the case of the Shakwak project, therefore, it was considered that two different kinds of meetings were required. Formal, relatively structured meetings were held, in March, in Whitehorse, the capital of Yukon Territory where the people have experienced similar enquiries of various kinds and have had previous experience with the Environmental Assessment and Review Process. In the communities along the actual route, however, informal discussions were held on issues defined by those living in the area. The Panel felt that a highly structured format could discourage people from making their views known.

There was participation by U.S. officials in the Canadian review. In accordance with U.S. requirements, a final Environmental Impact Statement was issued by U.S. authorities which contained, amongst other things, a summary of mitigative measures and a response to the major questions raised during the hearings in Canada.

During the course of the review, the Panel recognized that the potential for adverse social impact was great during the construction period. During that period the population of the highway corridor would more than double. It was obvious that, given the prevailing socio-economic infrastructure, there was a need to minimize adverse impact to the greatest extent possible.

In its report, the Panel concluded that there were no over-riding environmental or social concerns preventing the project from proceeding as scheduled. While the potential for adverse ecological and social impact from the project was considered to be significant, the Panel concluded that these impacts could be mitigated if certain procedures were followed and specific conditions were met. Specific recommendations were made dealing with coordination of the Shaktak project and the construction of the Alaska Highway Gas Pipeline, with physical and engineering issues, and with ecological issues.

Of major concern to the Panel, however, was the potential social impact of the project. The Panel, therefore, recommended a number of measures to mitigate these adverse impacts. Furthermore, the Panel felt there was no single government agency in place to effectively monitor the implementation of these recommendations. It therefore recommended the establishment of a Shaktak Review Committee, to be composed of members from federal and territorial government agencies, to carry out this function.

#### IV. EXPERIENCES GAINED FROM THE CASE STUDIES

**The case studies presented in this paper have demonstrated how public participation in the Canadian Environmental Assessment and Review Process has influenced various development proposals. Public involvement in the decision-making process has had and will continue to affect development action in Canada. Some of the main experiences gained from the case studies are summarized below.**

##### **1. Formation of the Environmental Assessment Panel**

**During the Eldorado public meetings in Port Granby, it became evident that in order for the review process to be credible, the Environmental Assessment Panel must be perceived as an independent body, free from "conflict of interest" situations. Specific recommendations on this subject were made by the Panel. In February 1977, the Environmental Assessment and Review Process was adjusted by the Federal Cabinet to permit individuals from outside the public service to act as Panel members. Furthermore, public servants serving as Panel members agree to dissociate themselves from the position their departments or agencies may take on the project under review.**

##### **2. Assistance to Public Groups**

**Experience has shown that a proponent is able to successfully provide opportunities to involve and inform people who support a project. It is doubted that opponents enjoy similar opportunities. As a result, various Panels have recommended that funding and other mechanisms be developed by the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office to ensure that the public participation element of the process provides an opportunity for all points of view to be adequately expressed. Although, a funding mechanism has not been approved, Panels have recognized the difficulties experienced by some concerned**

parties in obtaining expert advice and have arranged for technical witnesses or independent experts to be present at public meetings.

3. Public Accountability

Public review of development proposals has resulted in a requirement for greater accountability on the part of government agencies and proponents. Regardless of the Panel mandate the public generally adopts a broad definition of the environment. When confronted with, for example, demands for increased access to monitoring information, questions related to the efficiency of government regulatory and planning agencies, and questions related to the need for a specific project in the first instance, the developer and government agencies find they have little choice but to respond.

4. Flexibility of the Environmental Assessment and Review Process

Since the Environmental Assessment and Review Process is based on Cabinet Directives rather than an Act of Parliament, it is flexible and can be readily adjusted to accommodate changing needs.

In the two Northern projects (Shakwak Highway and Lancaster Sound), for example, the Panels held informal community meetings in which the public defined the issues of importance, as well as more formal, structured meetings where discussion of a more technical nature occurred in accordance with an established agenda. In all projects, public meetings are held to review the Environmental Impact Statements, however, the nature of public consultation prior to the meetings may vary according to the specific project. In the Eldorado case study, for example, public meetings were also held to

determine deficiencies in the Environmental Impact Statement; in the case of Roberts Bank, the public and government agencies were invited to submit written deficiencies; in the Lancaster Sound and Shakwak Highway projects, deficiencies were not sought prior to the final public review. The convening of informal public meetings together with more formal public reviews, especially for Northern projects, is becoming accepted as an effective means of gaining public input.

Early public involvement in the review process is considered essential. A combination of soliciting written comments from the public and government agencies together with one or more phases of public meetings is becoming a standard practice in the review of development proposals.

The case studies have shown that, *in spite of* the advantages of relatively informal meetings in encouraging public participation in small communities, there is nevertheless, an advantage to developing a methodology for structuring such meetings.

While the main purpose of public meetings is to allow the Environmental Assessment Panel to gather as much information as possible in order to make recommendations to the Minister, it is also in many cases, a learning experience for the participants. Procedures are being developed to ensure that interested parties have sufficient time to prepare briefs and that intervenors are given a reasonable opportunity to present their case at Panel meetings.

##### 5. Socio-economic Concerns

The case studies have shown that in a public review, socio-economic issues are perceived as important and

**inseparable from issues related to the physical environment. This close relationship is particularly evident in northern projects where the livelihood of people is dependent on the natural environment.**

**6. Public Information Programs**

**The Eldorado and Lancaster Sound case studies, in particular, revealed the importance of the developers' public information program. The lack of effective programs created public suspicion, and resulted in a general misunderstanding of the nature of the project.**

**7. Monitoring Activities**

**For any project for which approval to proceed is recommended and which may have a social and environmental impact, there is a public demand for co-ordinated follow-up studies involving the public, the proponent and all levels of government to assess the actual impact and recommend any additional mitigative measures, as well as to serve as a guide for future projects.**