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Nunavunmi Parnaiyiit
Nunavut Planning Commission
Commission d'Aménagement du Nunavut

August 10, 2022

Hon. Dan Vandal, PC, MP
Minister of Northern Affairs
25 Eddy Street, 7th Floor
Gatineau, QC
K1A 0H4

Delivered via e-mail: dan.vandal@canada.ca

Dear Minister Vandal:

I am writing to follow up on our July 8 meeting with Nunavut Planning Commission. Specifically, I would like to follow up on the point of adequate consultation as outlined in the Nunavut Agreement, 11.5.2, "...after such consultation as the NPC finds appropriate, shall be the preparation of a draft land use plan by the NPC." From our discussion you were interested in the breadth and depth of consultations undertaken to date by the NPC. Throughout the entire process of developing not just the current 2021 Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan, but the drafts that preceded it, the NPC has been keenly aware of the need to solicit and consider oral and written feedback from all stakeholders including federal departments and agencies, the Government of Nunavut, Inuit representative and landholder organizations, private sector and commercial representatives, municipalities, and hunter and trapper organizations and Nunavummiut. Within available resources, we have worked to ensure that the voices of individuals – the people that all of us as representatives of governments and public agencies are meant to be serving – have been heard and fully considered.

We understand that the federal government must fulfil its duty to consult as laid out in treaties, agreements, and Supreme Court decisions. As residents of Nunavut, we have embraced our obligation under the Nunavut Agreement to ensure that the voices of those who are most affected by the Plan and will have to live with its consequences, have been heard and integrated into the Plan.

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The process towards a Nunavut Land Use Plan began in earnest in 2007. Since then, there have been several iterations of the Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan (in 2012, 2014, 2016), leading to the most recent version released last year. At each stage, NPC staff and commissioners have held extensive discussions and consultations – both formally and informally. These iterative processes have directly informed the shape of the current Draft Plan, which has undergone substantial revision from where we started many years ago.

Since the launch of the current 2021 Draft, we have again travelled to every community in Nunavut to explain the draft and answer questions and we have reached out to and held information sessions with every participant that was interested. Even before the formal public hearing process begins, we have received dozens of formal written submissions and we expect to receive more before the record closes on January 10, 2023. We are ensuring that the formal public hearings – which have been made possible by your support – will be grounded in the tradition of Inuit oral communication and will include 5 representatives from every Nunavut community as well as from 10 transboundary indigenous communities. Without that support the Commission knows that many of the opinions and options that will be before the Commission at the Public Hearing may have been suppressed by the challenges of technology in these remote communities.

There are many competing interests that need to be balanced. The Nunavut Agreement makes it clear that the NPC's obligation to Inuit and communities is to balance the preservation of lands and waters that are vital to their culture, traditions, and food security with modern economic opportunities.

To demonstrate the depth and breadth of our engagement I have attached a detailed working draft record of consultation and engagement on the Draft Plan covering the period of 2007-2022. This is a working draft record that continues to evolve, and we will be including additional detail in the document over the coming months.

No matter how carefully conducted, consultation rarely leads to unanimity. We know that there are aspects of the current draft that leave some stakeholders less than satisfied. The Commission appreciates the thoughtful feedback that has already been received on the 2021 Draft Plan and looks forward to hearing from all participants in person at the upcoming public hearings. I understand that you may attend a public hearing session, as your schedule allows. We would be honoured and pleased to work with your staff to enable this. To that end, I have attached the schedule of hearings. You are more than welcome to attend one or more of these at your convenience. I am certain that participants would favorably support the federal government's commitment to the process that your attendance would demonstrate.

In closing, thank you for the time and effort you have already committed to this important undertaking and the support you have shown for the Commission's work. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues towards an historic achievement.

Yours Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Lester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shawn" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Lester".

Shawn Lester
Vice Chair

CC: Sharon Ehaloak. Executive Director NPC sehaloak@nunavut.ca