

March 23, 2021
Our File: WEC-044L

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
The Government of Canada
Fontaine Building 12th Floor
200 Sacré-Coeur Blvd.
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3

Sent via email and Canada Post

Re: Request for a Regional Assessment

Dear Minister Wilkinson:

Over the past decade, those who see value in Canada having a strong resource sector recognize the extreme difficulties that the Canadian oil and gas industry has encountered bringing high-value energy resources to market. In response to this continuing problem, the highly experienced principals of Western Energy Corridor Inc. have applied their collective expertise to advance a viable new energy corridor. Our work includes selection of a preferred route, detailed mapping, infrastructure concepts, and initial regulatory documentation, which is now positioned for detailed regulatory consultative processes to begin.

We are proposing the “**Western Energy Corridor**”, a multi-provincial, all-Canadian corridor that extends from east central Alberta across Saskatchewan to Churchill, Manitoba. Conceptually, a primary purpose of the corridor is to allow oil and natural gas pipelines, or other “future” resources such as hydrogen to reach Hudson Bay. In addition, high-voltage DC power lines co-located within the corridor would enhance the availability of “green” hydroelectricity in the western provinces, increasing access to solar and wind energy, potentially lowering the cost of large-scale clean energy, and stabilizing the electrical grid. This all-Canadian venture will economically serve Canadian markets, build important infrastructure in Canada’s north, reduce Central and Eastern Canada’s reliance on foreign energy, and expand Canada’s trade with global markets by way of the sovereign internal waters of Canada.

The Western Energy Corridor team has envisioned several potential corridor uses; however, no specific development project is being proposed at this time. We believe this corridor represents a significant opportunity to access new markets for Canada’s resources and products and to reduce Canada’s dependence on energy imports from other regions of the world, which do not necessarily represent Canada’s values or its environment, social, and governance (ESG) commitment. While we believe there are several significant major projects that would be proposed, the uncertainty and risk associated with environmental and regulatory approvals often dissuades proponents and investors from advancing projects past the pre-development or feasibility phase.

Our team believes the way to encourage such projects is for the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to conduct a Regional Assessment under the federal *Impact Assessment Act*. This assessment should determine if development within this corridor can be undertaken without causing significant impacts. Therefore, pursuant to Section 97 of the Canadian *Impact Assessment Act*, we are requesting that a Regional Assessment be conducted under Section 93

of the *Act* to advance efforts to establish an interprovincial economic corridor to Hudson Bay, including marine shipping in Canadian waters. This process should commence with Agency officials initiating an engagement process with federal, provincial and territorial government agencies, Indigenous groups, and other non-governmental organizations to discuss this initiative.

The concept of corridors has been studied extensively on an academic basis by the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary. Our team is recommending a more focused, highly detailed review of a specific, constructible corridor. In addition to the obvious economic value of developing Canada's resources, Western Energy Corridor Inc. believes that a Regional Assessment could substantially inform or improve the efficiency of project-specific federal assessments.

Brief Description of the Region

The requested Regional Assessment is for a multi-use economic corridor stretching from Alberta, crossing Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and terminating near Churchill, Manitoba. Initiating in Alberta, the corridor generally heads in an easterly direction, entering Saskatchewan north of Lloydminster. The corridor continues easterly across Saskatchewan, passing north of Prince Albert and Nipawin, where it starts to trend northeasterly entering Manitoba in the vicinity of The Pas. The northeasterly orientation continues as the corridor follows existing rail, road, and power line infrastructure near Wabowden, Thompson and Gillam. North of Gillam, the corridor turns northerly to follow the existing power line and rail infrastructure to its terminus near Churchill. The corridor is approximately 1,560 km in length with approximately 9% located in Alberta, 36% in Saskatchewan, and 55% in Manitoba. The land is generally agricultural in the western half and forested in the eastern half and sparsely populated throughout, except for the communities mentioned above. A conceptual map of the corridor's general location is shown in Figure 4 within the attached report.

For purposes of the Regional Assessment, the corridor includes marine shipping in Canadian waters through Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait to potential markets in northern, eastern, and central Canada and to global markets by way of International Waters in the Atlantic Ocean (see Figure 7 within the attached document).

We believe there are significant merits to conducting a Regional Assessment including:

- **A Regional Assessment could inform future project-specific federal impact assessment decisions.**

There are several foreseeable uses of the corridor including natural resource pipelines, road and railway infrastructure, power transmission, fibre optic transmission, commodity export terminals, port infrastructure and other future developments all leading to enhanced marine shipping in Hudson Bay and other Canadian waters. In addition, other direct and indirect initiatives, including expanded grain shipments, are possible. All these potential developments may also be subject to impact assessment under the *Act*. A

Regional Assessment could inform and contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of these future assessments.

- **There is potential for effects from development within federal jurisdiction, including cumulative effects, in the region.**

Potential effects within federal jurisdiction from anticipated development include, but are not limited to, adverse effects on fish and fish habitat, wildlife listed under the Species at Risk Act and changes to the environment that could affect the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

- **There is the potential for impacts, including cumulative impacts, to the rights of Indigenous people in the region.**

The Government of Canada's consultation with Indigenous groups that are affected by a corridor and resulting marine shipping may identify individual and cumulative impacts on Indigenous rights, traditional lands and resources, socioeconomic conditions, health, and community well-being.

- **There are opportunities for collaboration with jurisdictions, and for the involvement of others in the regional assessment.**

There are potential opportunities to collaborate with the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nunavut Territory. Depending on the geographic scope of the Regional Assessment to be conducted, marine shipping lanes would also pass-through Hudson Strait near lands in the Nunavik region of Northern Quebec and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition, there would be opportunities to involve and collaborate with other Indigenous groups, non-government organizations, and others in the planning and conduct of a Regional Assessment.

- **There has been considerable public interest related to development or cumulative effects in the area.**

Although this area has had limited development to date, there has been an increasing level of attention to the potential for resource transportation and export via marine shipping to Canadian and global markets. There has also been considerable recent study on a Canadian Northern Corridor conducted by the University of Calgary, School of Public Policy. We firmly believe that a regional assessment that provides for a means to identify and resolve impacts, including cumulative environmental impacts, will allow for new, high-value infrastructure to advance projects past pre-development phases. In addition, the described energy corridor will improve and build upon Canada's northern sovereign rights and will provide for multiple benefits including all-season roadways, health and social improvements, defence considerations, and far north access.

We are attaching a summary of work completed by Western Energy Corridor Inc. This summary provides additional details on the corridor and potential developments that may utilize the corridor. We understand that the information provided, including this letter and attachments, are considered to be on the public record and may be posted to the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry.

Following your initial review of this introductory material, we are prepared to answer any questions that you may have regarding the Western Energy Corridor and our request for a Regional Assessment. We would appreciate the opportunity to further our dialogue with you and your colleagues to describe our efforts in greater detail and to discuss the significant benefits that this corridor will bring to all of Canada.

All future correspondence in respect of this request should be directed to:

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Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. We look forward to your positive response at your earliest convenience.

Yours very truly,
Western Energy Corridor Inc.

<Original signed by>

Barry Singleton, P. Eng.
Director
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Attachment: **Western Energy Corridor Summary**

c.c.: Impact Assessment Agency
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