

Alaska - Yukon Territory



Gas Pipeline Update

From the Whitehorse Star

By ROBERT SIBLEY

Chances for a pipeline information centre being established received a heavy blow when Riverdale MLA Walt Lengerke's resolution calling for "immediate action" towards setting up a centre was defeated in an 8-2 vote in the legislature Monday afternoon.

Dissenting MLAs claimed, in effect, that continuous information gathering was an exercise in futility and what was really needed was coordinated government action and pipeline policies.

Some MLAs said they should be dealing with pipeline impacts that are already occurring and said governments are capable of supplying the necessary data.

Local Government Minister Ken McKinnon said that what was needed was merely a coordination of all available information in one place.

McKinnon claimed that over a three year period, before construction on the pipeline even began, an information centre would cost nearly \$1 million.

He said this is "not the time to go into an extensive centre," with "all the cost on the taxpayers of the Yukon."

There are many other alternatives to a centre, said McKinnon.

Lengerke said that if an information centre was important enough MLAs should be "prepared to spend the money."

Lengerke said the MLAs aren't responding to the wishes of Yukoners.

As far as the idea of a government information coordinator, Lengerke said the centre, to be credible to the public, has to be independent.

He said Yukon Territorial Government departments aren't doing enough on pipeline matters as it is, probably because they already have other areas of concern to handle.

Lengerke and Millard were seemingly amazed at fellow MLAs reasoning, and said, in effect, the assembly could not make decisions about pipeline impacts without having any data or knowledge of trends affecting the Yukon.

"Are we prepared to act without knowing what the impacts are?" said Lengerke.

Millard said, "information is the key to change...and if you don't have the information, how can you change things."