

Janzen, Heather

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Request to Speak - Joanne Blythe - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request – May 2024 Update - CK 6003-1
Attachments: Wild About Letter May 25.pdf; Naming Convention.docx

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 3:49 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Request to Speak - Joanne Blythe - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request – May 2024 Update - CK 6003-1

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Monday, May 27, 2024 - 15:45

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, May 27, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Joanne

Last Name: Blythe

Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name: [REDACTED]

Phone Number : [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] Munroe Avenue South

Ward: Ward 6

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Wild About Saskatoon

What do you wish to do ?: Request to Speak

If speaking will you be attending in person or remotely: Remotely

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: City Council May 29

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 10.1.1 Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2
Endorsement Request

Comments:

Wild About Saskatoon urges City Council to vote No to the Functional Planning Study for Phase 2 of the proposed Saskatoon Freeway.

Attachments:

- [Wild About Letter May 25.pdf](#)132.24 KB
- [Naming Convention.docx](#)872.97 KB

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No



May 25, 2024

RE: Saskatoon City Council Meeting, May 29, 2024 Agenda Item 10.1.1

Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request – May 2024 Update [TS2024-0205]

Dear City Council,

If you were hoping for a commitment from the province to protect the Northeast and Small Swales, the letter from Minister Carr must have come as a huge disappointment.

Apart from a recitation of the inadequate mitigative measures proposed in the Functional Planning Study, this letter has very little to offer. Although the province is trying to nail down the route of the Freeway, all of the other proposed features are To Be Determined at the detailed design stage, following the process laid out in the Saskatchewan Supplement to the Transportation Association of Canada guidelines. This lack of confirmation is not reassuring, particularly considering that any project of this magnitude is likely to be undertaken as a Public-Private Partnership, with a cost-conscious private owner driving decisions.

We are also troubled by the failure of the Minister to guarantee that an Environmental Assessment would be held, however belatedly.¹ It is not unheard of for government agencies to consider dividing projects on the scale of the Saskatoon Freeway into phases, in an attempt to avoid the Environmental Assessment Act. (See attachment.) For example, the Regina Bypass, at that time the largest infrastructure project ever undertaken in this province, was deemed not to require an Environmental Assessment.²

In essence, the letter from Minister Carr is asking you to put your faith in Business As Usual. But as Council has discovered from your own efforts to protect natural areas, established processes

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/saskatoon-freeway-environmental-review-1.5264960>

²

[http://saskbuilds.ca/projects/ReginaBypass/Project%20Agreement/The%20Regina%20Bypass%20Project%20-%20Schedule%201%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Ministry%20Permits%20Licences%20and%20Approvals%20\(Execution%20Version\).pdf](http://saskbuilds.ca/projects/ReginaBypass/Project%20Agreement/The%20Regina%20Bypass%20Project%20-%20Schedule%201%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Ministry%20Permits%20Licences%20and%20Approvals%20(Execution%20Version).pdf)

prioritize development over other critical values. Protecting the Swales takes creativity and commitment far beyond what is conveyed by Minister Carr's letter. We urge you to vote No to the Functional Planning Study for Phase 2 of the proposed Saskatoon Freeway.

Respectfully submitted,
Joanne Blythe, Andrea Carroll
Abby Chicoine & Chad Hammond

Wild about Saskatoon
www.wildaboutsaskatoon.org
hello@wildaboutsaskatoon.org

LAKE DIEFENBAKER IRRIGATION EXPANSION PROJECT NAMING CONVENTION

ISSUE

- It has been noted in discussions with stakeholders (regulators, First Nations and others) that there is confusion over the use of Phases 1, 2 and 3 to describe the separate projects within the overall irrigation project as announced by the Saskatchewan government.
- The use of names, rather than phases, is designed to show that each portion is a distinct project and to prevent confusion, especially by the environmental assessment regulators as to project scope.

RECOMMENDATION

- It is recommended that the use of the terms Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 be replaced by the following naming convention:
 - Phase 1 be renamed to the Westside Rehabilitation Project;
 - Phase 2 be renamed to the Westside Expansion Project; and
 - Phase 3 continue to be called the Qu'Appelle South Water Conveyance Project.

KEY MESSAGES

- The proposed naming convention strategy identifies each phase as a separate and distinct project to be assessed on its own merits against the federal and provincial Environmental Assessment processes rather than one large Lake Diefenbaker Irrigation Expansion Project.
- The new naming convention is designed to help stakeholders understand that these are all separate projects, subject to different approvals processes, separate government funding, etc.
- The risk in retaining the Phase names is that three phrases will continue to be viewed as one project with component parts that are interrelated, running the risk of one federal and/or provincial Environmental Assessment processes delaying the projects for years.

BACKGROUND

- Upon review of documents such as the Western Economic Diversification (WED) water study that recommended federal Impact Assessment (IA) for the whole project (Phases 1 through 3 inclusive), Ministry of Environment's (MOE) internal recommendation for a full Environmental Impact assessment (EIA) and subsequent conversations with MOE all indicated that there is a view that this is one irrigation project with inter-related phases.
- The prevailing consensus in these interactions is that any attempt to separate the phases is just gaming the system to avoid environmental assessment processes. This runs counter to our internal analysis as presented to the Environmental Working Group, which GOS's legal adviser indicated aligned with their analysis.
- It is also understood that in the initial wording of any contract for federal money that a full federal IA is required. While we disagree, there must be some logic behind arguing a counter position and differentiating the projects will help.
- We have also seen Indigenous groups weighing in on the project despite the phase(s) that may impact them being years away. We want to avoid this confusion, but not limit interested parties or involvement.

- What is currently called:
 - Phase 1 is largely a rehabilitation of the existing canal albeit upgraded to handle Phase 2 water requirements. We believe that this project should not require an EIA to proceed as most of the route is already disturbed and there is a water allocation for it;
 - Phase 2 is new and green field. This may attract a provincial EIA, but the hope is not to trigger a federal Impact Assessment (IA). We have a strategy in place to mitigate time delays should a provincial EIA be required; and
 - Phase 3 is a conveyance of water to another watershed and is not physically associated or dependent on the Westside projects. This phase triggers the federal IA process and likely also the provincial EIA process. If this is the ruling project in the approvals process, we are looking at many years before any work on any phase can start.
- The proposed approvals strategy is designed to have projects moving forward in a steady progression and each phase was examined on its own merits against the federal and provincial Environmental Assessment requirements. The risk in retaining the Phase names is that three phrases will continue to be viewed as one project with component parts that are interrelated. The potential outcome is that the irrigation project with its three phases will attract a full federal EIA (as recommended by WED) and, or a provincial EIA of the whole project (as recommended by MOE). Both processes would proceed at the pace of the slowest component and no work could be done on any part of the project until a full IA/EIA decision is rendered. Depending on the process, that could be three to five years before any work can start.

ANALYSIS

The names as proposed invoke a sense of place and purpose that will help differentiate the projects as we work through the approvals processes and communicate with all stakeholders.

The concern is that the irrigation will be viewed as a single project and that there will be pressure on both levels of government to assess the projects as a single unit. Not having access to the MOE recommendation, except anecdotally, the only reference is the Western Economic Diversification paper issued mid-year 2020 that clearly recommends a full assessment of the project under the federal IA process. The report sees the Phases as parts of a single project. Overcoming this view as one project indivisible will be a challenge to overcome in the approvals process and renaming is part of the process to differentiate the projects as separate and distinct as each segment stands on its own merits.