Dear Senator Galvez:

When the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources presented its report in December 2017 on *An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act* (Bill C-17), it appended an observation recommending that the Minister report back to the Committee with a progress report on the oversight group. I am pleased to be writing to you today to provide the following update.

The establishment of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* (YESAA) Oversight Group (the “Oversight Group”) was agreed to in the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* ‘Reset’ Memorandum of Understanding, dated December 2017 (the “Reset MOU”), by all self-governing Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Yukon. The Oversight Group’s purpose is to oversee the development assessment process in Yukon and promote the ongoing improvement of the development assessment process in a tri-lateral way.

On July 19, 2018, the inaugural meeting of the YESAA Oversight Group included representatives from Yukon Government, Yukon First Nations and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC). During this meeting, it was determined that for the first year, the Regional Director-General, Yukon Region (CIRNAC) would chair the Group.

Two meetings of the Oversight Group have taken place since July 2018, which have been productive and resulted in practical ideas for moving forward. The Oversight Group will set a series of priorities for examination and will develop suggestions and recommendations to address these priority areas. The means by which any one priority will be addressed will be determined by the Oversight Group and could include forums,
working groups, technical committees, and any other means as agreed upon by the Oversight Group.

In July 2018, each of the parties developed a list of their priorities. Following a meeting of the Oversight Group in September 2018, an approach to addressing the priorities was agreed upon. Three common themes have emerged: 1) YESAA Forums (Issue/technical Workshops); 2) Consultation and Engagement; and 3) Policy/Procedural Aspects.

In addition, the Oversight Group met with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) to discuss how the Board would be able to participate and contribute to the work of the Oversight Group going forward. The Oversight Group recognizes the important insights the Board brings to any discussion regarding the development assessment process in the Yukon and the operation of YESAA.

With respect to the issues of capacity and funding for First Nations’ adequate participation in assessment processes, I am pleased to report that increases in federal funding for all Yukon First Nations were implemented in April 2018. In fact, federal funding for YESAA implementation has been effectively doubled for each Yukon First Nation. This doubling of funding will assist the First Nations by increasing their ability to participate in the numerous assessments occurring across the territory.

In summary, it should be noted that the YESAA Oversight Group is still in its infancy in terms of setting a medium to long-term agenda to address specific issues raised, particularly by industry representatives during parliamentary review of Bill C-17. However, the promise of this tripartite collaboration, with responsibility and decision-making located in the North, will prove a cornerstone for sound resource management and responsible economic development in Yukon. The Government is committed to working in partnership with Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Government to improve confidence in the environmental assessment process and support the assessment regime in the Yukon.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dominic LeBlanc, P.C., Q.C., M.P.