

# MACKENZIE VALLEY GAS PIPELINE IN RETROSPECT

Alaz Munzur

## SUMMARY

Canada's history is punctuated with a number of big and bold national projects, such as the Trans-Canada Highway and the Canadian Pacific Railway, that have played defining roles for the country and its citizens' prosperity.<sup>1</sup> However, over more recent decades, there has been much less success in bringing such projects to fruition. Indeed, the growing number of major national infrastructure projects that have been stalled or cancelled suggests some re-thinking of the factors that impact the development of these projects is required.

The lengthy regulatory and review processes to assess major infrastructure development projects and lack of long-term planning are often viewed as sources of conflict between the economic objectives and environmental conservation and culture and heritage preservation. Cancelled and stalled infrastructure projects can offer valuable insight into this and can lead to better decision-making processes around infrastructure development in Canada. For this purpose, this communiqué provides a retrospective look at the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline.

Industry proponents developed the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project in the 1970s in response to the federal government's decision to facilitate the delivery of gas from Canada's Arctic to markets in the south (Dosman 1975, 119-124). About half a century later, the project was finally cancelled. As one of the largest infrastructure projects ever considered in Canada, the issues encountered throughout the initial development and regulatory review phases of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline proposals can provide valuable lessons for similar major infrastructure projects.