

## **SUMMARY OF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROPONENT:** Ski Asessippi Limited

**PROPOSAL NAME:** Asessippi Ski Area and Winter Park Chair Lift and Run Expansion

**CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT:** Two

**TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT:** Recreation – Ski Hills

**CLIENT FILE NO.:** 3172.10

### **OVERVIEW:**

The Proposal was received on August 8, 2006. It was dated August 4, 2006. The advertisement of the proposal was as follows:

“A proposal has been filed by Ski Asessippi Limited for an expansion of its ski facilities in Asessippi Provincial Park. The expansion would consist of a new quad chairlift to the east of the existing triple lift, an extension of four existing ski runs, the construction of two new runs and some interconnecting skiways, and an expansion of the operation’s snowmaking system. Construction on the ski expansion would begin as soon as regulatory approvals were obtained.”

The Proposal was advertised in the Russell Banner and in the Roblin Review on Tuesday, August 15, 2006. It was placed in the Main, Winnipeg Public Library, Eco-Network and Dauphin Public Library public registries, and in the office of the R.M. of Shellmouth-Boulton as a public registry. It was distributed to TAC members on August 9, 2006. The closing date for comments from members of the public and TAC members was September 14, 2006.

### **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:**

**Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton** The Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton is providing the following document in support of the application being made by the Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park for the provision of a chair lift and run expansion at Asessippi ski Hill.

The Asessippi Ski Hill has become a major component of the economic infrastructure as well as the social and lifestyle fabric of our region. The continued hardship faced by various aspects of agriculture has necessitated a shift in the local economy in order to avoid financial ruin for the community and region. Tourism has become our new economy – providing jobs, investment, economic growth and financial alternatives to

those looking to be part of our region. A key component of the tourism industry expansion for the area has been the success of Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park. With nearly 100,000 visitors during the past ski season, the venue has become a huge economic driver for our community and area.

The creation of the Shellmouth Dam along with Lake of the Prairies nearly 40 years ago resulted in a significant negative impact to the region. Lost population, lost potential and the need to compensate both resulted in the development of the Asessippi Provincial Park. The Park was intended to create the necessary economic activity and financial spin-offs to compensate for the lost land and displaced families.

Unfortunately, the Park project and much of the planned investment, including a ski hill, cottage developments, golf course, etc. remained dormant for more than a generation. It wasn't until the early 1990's when local investors and entrepreneurs became involved that the Park began to generate some of the financial benefits that were promised.

Interest in the Park as a recreation destination has increased in recent years and with it so has investment and infrastructure in the region. Cottage developments, business expansion, a new golf course and associated economic spin-offs are all attributable to increased recreation opportunities in the area and more specifically the impact that the Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park has had in expanding tourism for the region. As with any facility, however, in order to survive and thrive, the Ski Hill must look to expand opportunities. The Ski Hill must look at ways of reinventing and redeveloping itself in order to attract new customers and also to maintain the interest of existing patrons.

The continued success of the Ski Hill is paramount as it is the cornerstone of the new tourism economy for our area. Rural Manitoba continues to face many hardships with the loss of population, reduced opportunity in the traditional economy of agriculture and the need to replace it with some type of long term sustainable alternative. Tourism has been touted by many to be that alternative.

In addition to the economic role the Ski Hill plays, it also provides an alternative form of participation in sport to the traditional team sports i.e. hockey, volleyball, basketball and curling that have been available in our area. The interest of youth in the Ski Hill and their level of participation demonstrate the need for a sustainable facility and the desire for a healthy outlet for their energy. In a time when childhood obesity as well as the physical health of all ages is a major concern, the provision of as many alternatives as possible to promote activity is critical.

In closing, the Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton has been a strong supporter of the Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park since the resurrection of the concept in the early 1990s. The Ski Hill is a true success story – one that has not always been supported by those outside our region. What has been created at Asessippi is a facility that supports the economic, social and lifestyle dynamics of our region. Its continued sustainability and success will play a huge part in the future of our community and region.

**Town of Russell** The Town of Russell is providing the following document in support of the application being made by the Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park for the provision of a chair lift and run expansion at Asessippi ski Hill.

The Asessippi Ski Hill has become a major component of the economic infrastructure as well as the social and lifestyle fabric of our region. The continued hardship faced by various aspects of agriculture has necessitated a shift in the local economy in order to avoid financial ruin for the community and region. Tourism has become our new economy providing jobs, investment, economic growth and financial alternatives to those looking to be part of our region. A key component of the tourism industry expansion for the area has been the success of Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park. With nearly 100,000 visitors during the past ski season, the venue has become a huge economic driver for our community and area.

The creation of Shellmouth Dam along with Lake of the Prairies nearly 40 years ago resulted in a significant negative economic impact to the region. Lost population, lost potential and the need to compensate both resulted in the development of Asessippi Park. The Park was intended to create the necessary economic activity and financial spin-offs to compensate for the lost land and displaced families.

Unfortunately the Park project and much of the planned investment, including a ski hill, cottage developments, golf course, etc. remained dormant for more than a generation. Not until the early 1990's when local investors and entrepreneurs became involved did the Park begin to generate some of the financial benefits that were promised.

Interest in the Park as a recreation destination has increased in recent years and with it so has investment and infrastructure in the region. Cottage developments, business expansion, a new golf course and associated economic spin-offs are all attributable to increased recreation opportunities in the area and more specifically the impact Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park have had in expanding tourism for the region. As with any facility however, in order to survive and thrive the Ski Hill must look to expand opportunities. To attract new customers but also to maintain the interest of existing patrons the Ski Hill must look at ways of reinventing and redeveloping itself.

The continued success of the Ski Hill is paramount as it is the cornerstone of the new tourism economy for Russell and area. Rural Manitoba continues to face many hardships with the loss of population, reduced opportunity in the traditional economy of agriculture and the need to replace it with some type of long term sustainable alternative. Tourism has been touted by many to be that alternative. For Russell and area tourism in general and more specifically the Ski Hill have become a flash point for renewed interest by businesses in our community to examine the revitalization of Main Street in Russell.

The Russell Main Street project will require an investment of between 5 and 10 million dollars before it is complete. Once accomplished the revitalization is intended to reposition the community to take full advantage of the tourism economy being created. But tourism like any industry needs strong infrastructure, unique products and a constantly evolving service level to be successful. The expansion of the Ski Hill will

supply some of those factors for our region and allow local entrepreneurs to continue with investment in business development such as the revitalization of Main Street.

In addition to the economic role the Ski Hill plays it also provides an alternative form of participation in sport to the traditional team sports i.e. hockey, volleyball, basketball, curling, that have been available in our area. The interest of youth in the ski hill and their level of participation demonstrate the need for a sustainable facility and the desire for a healthy outlet for their energy. In a time when childhood obesity as well as the physical health of all ages is a major concern, the provision of as many alternatives as possible to promote activity is critical.

In closing, the Town of Russell has been a strong supporter of the Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park since the resurrection of the concept in the early 1990s. The Ski Hill is a true success story, one that has not always been supported by those outside our region. What has been created at Asessippi is a facility that supports the economic, social and lifestyle dynamics of our region. Its continued sustainability and success will play a huge part in the future of our community and region.

**Russell and District Chamber of Commerce** The Russell & District Chamber of Commerce is providing the following document in support of the application being made by the Asessippi Ski Hill & Winter Park for the provision of a chair lift and run expansion.

With the hardships of the Agriculture economics in Rural Manitoba, Russell & Area has shifted concentration to the Tourism Industry to maintain economic growth. We have experienced the development of a number of major tourism attractions including Asessippi Provincial Park, Inglis Elevators National Historic Site and our Major Component the Asessippi Ski Hill & Winter Park, this combined with local historic sites, beautiful landscape, access to the Trans Canada Trail, abundant wild life, and numerous recreation and accommodation options, places Russell & District in a ideal situation for further tourism development and expansion, including cottage developments, golf course, and our Main St. Revitalization Project, this all attributes to sustainable business retention and expansion.

As the increased interest of the Asessippi Ski Hill grows, the need to expand is essential to their continued success and growth, and is paramount to the growth of the Tourism Industry and the Economics of Trade & Commerce for the Russell & District Area.

In closing the Russell & District Chamber of Commerce is a firm supporter of the Asessippi Ski Hill and Winter Park, and their continued existence has a positive effect on the quality of community life for the Russell & District Area.

**COMMENTS FROM THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

**Manitoba Conservation – Sustainable Resource and Policy Management**

1. To facilitate clean up and prevent unnecessary contamination from accidental spills at the on-site fueling area, a portable drip tray should be used, all transfers of product from tank to equipment should be supervised, and spill recovery equipment and drums for proper disposal should be readily available.
2. A search of the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre (CDC) database resulted in no occurrences for the area outlined in the Ski Asessippi Limited EA proposal. Therefore there were no specific concerns related to this project.

Note: since many areas of the province have never been thoroughly surveyed, the absence of data in the CDC database in any particular geographic area does not necessarily mean that species or ecological communities of concern are not present. The information should therefore not be regarded as a final statement on the occurrence of any species of concern nor can it substitute for on-site surveys for species that will be impacted by the development.

It is the responsibility of the proponent to inspect the area prior to and during construction to determine if any listed species may be impacted. The proponent needs to be aware that if rare or endangered species are present, removal or destruction of individuals or their habitat may be in contravention of Subsection 10(1) “Prohibition” of the Endangered Species Act (Manitoba). In addition, the federal Species at Risk Act prohibits any activities that kill or otherwise harm COSEWIC listed plant or animal species and prohibits destruction of habitat for these species. If species of concern are present, the proponent must contact the Biodiversity Conservation Section of the Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch (Nicole Firlotte, 945-6998) to discuss possible mitigation options.

Note: all proponents who conduct biological surveys in conjunction with their developments are asked to share that data with the Biodiversity Conservation Section. This will provide important updates to the CDC database.

Disposition:

These comments can be addressed through licence conditions. The comments will also be provided to the proponent and consultant for information.

**Manitoba Water Stewardship**

Manitoba Water Stewardship has reviewed the above noted file and submit the following comments for your consideration:

There should be minimal disturbance to sediment and vegetation along the stream bank during the placement of the intake pipe and pump house.

The alteration to surface drainage patterns should be kept to a minimum. If any new surface drains are to be constructed they should be constructed as shallow depressions and minimal removal of vegetation and soil should be observed during their construction.

The Shell River provides year round and seasonal spawning, nursery and feeding habitat for 28 fish species, including recreational and commercial significant species such as walleye, northern pike, yellow perch and white sucker. Two of 28 species, the bigmouth shiner and chestnut lamprey, are listed as Species of Special Concern under the Species at Risk Act.

The Fisheries Enhancement Initiative Fund provided \$25,000 to the Shell River Watershed Board to hire a consultant to do the Shell River watershed assessment in 2001. A range of activities within the watershed were identified as having the potential to impact on water quality and fish habitat. Among these was the need to continually monitor erosion areas attributed with the clearing of the steeply graded terrain for the existing ski runs.

From a Fisheries Branch perspective of maintaining the existing fishery there are a number of areas that we have highlighted. These areas are related to fish habitat which is a federal responsibility under the Fisheries Act. As such DFO's review with the intent to manage fish habitat under the no net loss policy should cover our fisheries management interests.

1. Instream flow needs – Proposal will increase the amount of water withdrawn during a period when flow is already low. While an increase of 16.2% is anticipated and is well below the allowable pumping rate of 0.18 cms in their Water Rights Act Licence (page 5), was minimum instream flow a consideration when determining this allowable rate and what happens in years of record low flows?
2. Construction of the new water intake pipe and pumphouse – Proposal indicates the pumphouse will be at the base of the chair lift with a 30 m buffer between the pumphouse and river. According to Milani (2002), the Shell River has a 66.7% probability of overland flooding annually. Is the 30 m buffer sufficient distance to ensure no flooding of infrastructure or potential to introduce contaminants into the river?
3. Due to the potential to flood, temporary and permanent erosion and sediment measures along with ongoing monitoring will be critical where the bank will be cut for the intake pipe.
4. Proponents indicate the intake pipe will have a 36 micron screen – Earlier EAP studies indicated that the existing intake would have negligible effects on fish and fish habitat given the fish species present and time of withdrawal. This proposal should still indicate discussion and compliance with DFO.

The proponent or their consultant is advised to contact Jim McConkey at Water Licencing Branch (945-6114) regarding possible amendments to the existing water rights licence.

Locations of any potable water sources within the vicinity of the proposed project were not mentioned. It is unclear how the drinking water is provided to the visitors. Similarly, no indications were provided about the wastewater management within the proposed project.

## Disposition:

Most of these comments can be addressed through licence conditions. All of the comments will be provided to the proponent and consultant for information. With respect to instream flows on the Shell River, a formal instream flow analysis was not done prior to the original allocation of flow through the Water Rights licensing process. The limit was set by Manitoba Water Stewardship based on a percentage of expected low flows, in a manner similar to several other allocations from streamflow that were licensed in the same time period. With respect to comments about water supply and wastewater disposal infrastructure, there are no nearby users of surface water or groundwater at the Development. Water is supplied to the Development by a pipeline from Inglis, and wastewater is collected in a holding tank and hauled to the Inglis wastewater treatment lagoon. These arrangements would continue with the expanded development.

**Historic Resources Branch**

No concerns.

**Mines Branch**

No concerns.

**Medical Officer of Health – Assiniboine and Brandon Regional Health Authorities**

No adverse public health effects are anticipated.

**Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency**

I have undertaken a survey of federal departments with respect to determining interest in the project noted above. I can confirm that the project information provided has been distributed to all federal departments with a potential interest. I am enclosing copies of the relevant responses for your file.

Based on the responses to the federal survey, I have not yet been able to determine whether the application of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will be required for this project. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) requires additional information before it can determine whether an environmental assessment (EA) under the CEAA will be required. DFO is presently preparing a list of its information requirements. I will forward this list to you as soon as I receive it. DFO also indicated that it possess specialist knowledge that may assist in the environmental review of this project and is interested in participating in the provincial review. Please include DFO in the provincial process as requested.

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) has provided a letter which lists areas of expertise on which it is prepared to provide specialist advice on request (copy attached).

## Disposition:

As of September 21, 2006, DFO had not provided a list of additional information requirements. Once received, the list will be forwarded to the consultant for

attention. The proponent has reported that direct contact has been made with DFO concerning the snowmaking water intakes.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

No additional information is required to address public or TAC concerns.

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

No requests for a public hearing were received. Accordingly, a public hearing is not recommended for this project.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

All comments received on the Proposal can be addressed as licence conditions. Therefore, it is recommended that the Development be licensed under The Environment Act subject to the limits, terms and conditions as described on the attached Draft Environment Act Licence. It is further recommended that enforcement of the Licence be assigned to the Western Region.

**PREPARED BY:**

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