

**September 2017**

## **Meaningful Engagement in Environmental Review**

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

- **The current public comment requirements occur too late in the project design process to consider community needs and concerns – causing both costly delays and project changes or disenfranchised community participation.**
- **Public concerns raised during the comment period can conflict with regulatory requirements, making it difficult for RGUs to provide meaningful responses to public comments and result in ineffective public participation.**

### **The Panel agrees that the following conditions enable meaningful engagement:**

- **Time and timing of meetings:**
  - Timing is key
  - Ensure early input (in the project timeline)
  - Regular open meetings
- **Meeting location:**
  - Go to where people are
  - Culturally appropriate space
- **Who is present:**
  - Having expertise in room (who can act), knowing who is there
  - Talk to each other/neighbors
  - Skilled independent facilitator
- **Other meeting process/format conditions:**
  - Variety of ways to provide input
  - Well defined process up front
  - Not “check-the-box” for proposers/RGUs
- **Type of exchange:**
  - Education components (by proposer/city)
  - Listening component
  - Commitment to be open/listen
  - Face-to-face contact
  - Consider language and cultural needs
- **Clarity/transparency around meeting topic, what is at stake, what decisions are made:**
  - Clear identification of stakeholders early on
- **Relationship between parties involved in process:**
  - Participants are convinced they can make difference, but also know limitations
  - No upfront assumption about community needs/concerns

### **The Panel Recommends that the EQB should:**

- **Include a question on the EAW form that describes the public engagement process implemented for the project**
- **Include a question on the EAW form that describes all of the opportunities for public input – including permit notice requirements**
- **Change requirements for how the public is notified about a project**
- **Develop best practices guidance materials for project proposers and RGUs, that include the elements described above.**

