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March 27, 2019

E-FILED

British Columbia Utilities Commission  
Sixth Floor – 900 Howe Street  
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Attention: Patrick Wruck, Commission Secretary

Dear Mr. Wruck:

**NorthRiver Midstream Operations LP (NRLP) and NorthRiver Midstream Operations GP Inc. (NRGP) Application for an exemption pursuant to Section 88(3) of the *Utilities Commission Act***

We write on behalf of NRLP and NRGP in connection with the Application for an exemption. As directed under Order No. G-61-19 we enclose the Final Submission of NRLP and NRGP.

Yours very truly,

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**BRITISH COLUMBIA UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**NORTHRIVER MIDSTREAM OPERATIONS LP  
AND NORTHRIVER MIDSTREAM OPERATIONS GP INC.  
APPLICATION FOR AN EXEMPTION PURSUANT TO SECTION  
88(3) OF THE *UTILITIES COMMISSION ACT***

**Final Submission  
of NorthRiver Midstream Operations LP  
and NorthRiver Midstream Operations GP Inc.**

**March 27, 2019**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	1
2. The Westcoast Framework for Light-handed Regulation .....	2
3. Transfer from Federal to Provincial Jurisdiction .....	4
4. The Proposal to adopt parts of the Westcoast Framework will not negatively impact Customers.....	6
5. Other Matters Discussed at the Workshop.....	9
6. The Requested Order is Critical to Completing the Transaction.....	11
7. Conclusions.....	13

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1. NorthRiver Midstream Operations LP and NorthRiver Midstream Operations GP Inc. (collectively "**NorthRiver Midstream**") applied to the British Columbia Utilities Commission ("**Commission**") on January 7, 2019 (the "**Application**") for an order pursuant to section 88(3) of the *Utilities Commission Act* ("**UCA**") exempting from Part 3 of the *UCA* NorthRiver Midstream and certain assets (the "**Field Services Assets**" as defined in the Application). NorthRiver Midstream has agreed to purchase the Field Services Assets from Enbridge Inc.'s ("**Enbridge**") subsidiary Westcoast Energy Inc. ("**Westcoast**"), subject to satisfaction of certain closing conditions including the receipt of certain specified regulatory approvals and exemptions.
2. In addition to consultation with the existing Westcoast customers utilizing the Field Services Assets prior to the filing of this Application, subsequent to filing, both NorthRiver Midstream and Westcoast provided the Application to all such customers and also posted the various notices directed by the Commission during this proceeding.
3. This proceeding included an Information Request ("**IR**") process pursuant to which the Commission submitted an IR to NorthRiver Midstream and NorthRiver Midstream submitted its response. The proceeding also included a workshop at which the Commission staff and the hearing panel (the "**Panel**") asked clarifying questions and provided NorthRiver Midstream with the opportunity to provide further background information related to the Application.
4. There are no registered interveners or interested parties in this proceeding. No current or potential new customer who will utilize the Field Services Assets (nor anybody else) has considered it necessary to submit IRs to NorthRiver Midstream, make any submission on process for the Application, participate in the Commission's workshop or otherwise participate in this proceeding.

5. Nobody has objected to the request for an exemption from Part 3 of the *UCA*. The Commission staff and the Panel have not raised any matters through the IRs or workshop that would cast doubt on the appropriateness of an exemption. There have been no questions related to whether an exemption from *UCA* Part 3 should be granted, but there have been questions related to the appropriate form of that exemption, which is the focus of this submission.

## 2. THE WESTCOAST FRAMEWORK FOR LIGHT-HANDED REGULATION

6. The Field Services Assets include 6 of the total 19 gas processing plants located in British Columbia and Alberta that Brookfield Asset Management ("**Brookfield**"), through various Brookfield entities, has agreed to purchase from Enbridge or its subsidiaries, subject to satisfaction of certain closing conditions, including the receipt of certain specified regulatory approvals and exemptions. The other 13 gas plants are already subject to the provincial jurisdiction of either British Columbia or Alberta.
7. The Field Services Assets are presently subject to federal jurisdiction, including the regulatory jurisdiction of the National Energy Board ("**NEB**"). Federal regulatory jurisdiction over the Field Services Assets was contested by, among others, the Province of British Columbia, until 1998 when the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the federal character of Westcoast's gas gathering and processing facilities on the basis that those facilities and Westcoast's interprovincial pipeline were functionally integrated, subject to common control, direction and management by Westcoast and operated as one enterprise. The rates and terms and conditions for services provided at all of the Field Services Assets have therefore been subject to NEB jurisdiction.
8. Since 1998, regulation of the Field Services Assets by the NEB has been under a light-handed regulatory framework (the "**Westcoast Framework**") approved by the NEB (see Exhibit A2-1). The Westcoast Framework was initially based on a negotiated multi-year incentive toll settlement pursuant to which the settlement parties agreed on the

methodologies for fixing the tolls, which Westcoast would charge in regards to services provided at these assets.<sup>1</sup> The settlement also contemplated that there would be a transition towards negotiated, market-based arrangements between Westcoast and its customers in regard to gas gathering and processing services.<sup>2</sup>

9. The Westcoast Framework was introduced as a model of light-handed regulation for Westcoast's gas gathering and processing services to address increasing competition in the provision of those services, Westcoast's need to compete in an evolving commercial market, and the requirements of Westcoast's customers for flexible arrangements which met their individual situations and which could be negotiated quickly as circumstances required without the burden of any unnecessary regulatory process.
10. All contracts for service utilizing the Field Services Assets have been negotiated with almost no need to invoke the NEB complaint process under the Westcoast Framework.<sup>3</sup> During the 20 plus years that the Westcoast Framework has been in place, the marketplace for gas gathering and processing services in British Columbia has continued to evolve and Westcoast's market share in respect of such services has continued to decline. This marketplace is now very competitive and all market participants are highly sophisticated.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, market participants have known throughout this period that the principles in the Westcoast Framework are available to be applied to resolve any complaint. Thus, under federal regulation there has been a high degree of predictability as to the way in which any complaint about services utilizing the Field Services Assets would be resolved if a regulatory resolution was required.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibit A2-1, NEB Decision, Chapter 1 - Background and Application, page 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Only once has the NEB considered a complaint in the context of the Westcoast Framework. The NEB Decision rejected the complaint by Murphy Oil Company is attached to NorthRiver Midstream's response to BCUC IR 3.2.

<sup>4</sup> Workshop Transcript, pages 20 to 21 and 30 to 31.

### 3. TRANSFER FROM FEDERAL TO PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION

11. If the pending Enbridge – Brookfield transaction is completed, the Field Services Assets will cease to be subject to common control, direction and management by Westcoast as part of its interprovincial pipeline system and, accordingly, will move from federal to provincial jurisdiction, as follows:
- regulatory jurisdiction over matters such as construction, operation, safety and integrity, and decommissioning of facilities; land acquisition; and potential impacts to the environment and communities would move from the NEB to the British Columbia Oil and Gas Commission (“**BC OGC**”), which will be processing numerous permit applications submitted by NorthRiver Midstream; and
  - economic regulatory jurisdiction would move from the NEB and the Westcoast Framework (where tolls for gathering and processing services are negotiated under light-handed regulation on the basis that the Field Services Assets are part of an interprovincial pipeline) to the Commission (where gas gathering and gas processing facilities are uniformly exempt from regulation under Part 3 of the *UCA*, and such facilities are subject to a complaint-based regime similar to that which applies under Part 4 of the *UCA*).
12. Currently, the owners/operators of gas gathering and processing facilities in British Columbia, whether the facilities are under federal or provincial jurisdiction, are free to negotiate service contracts with customers because these facilities operate in a competitive environment and their customers have ample viable alternatives available to them. The Commission has been clear that it believes complaints-based regulation similar to *UCA* Part 4 regulation is more suitable for facilities like the Field Services Assets than Part 3 regulation. Under Part 4 of the *UCA*, a person that owns or operates gas processing facilities is not a common processor and is not subject to regulation unless there is a complaint and, after a hearing, the Commission declares the person to be a common processor. If the Commission declares a person to be a common processor, the key requirements would be that the person must not unreasonable

discriminate (a) between itself and persons who apply for processing services offered by the person, or (b) among the persons who so apply.<sup>5</sup> On application by a person that uses or seeks to use the facilities of a person declared to be a common processor, the Commission may establish conditions under which the common processor must accept and process raw gas.<sup>6</sup>

13. While the Commission has been clear that it believes complaints-based regulation similar to *UCA* Part 4 regulation is more suitable for facilities providing services similar to the Field Services Assets than *UCA* Part 3 regulation, it has not had occasion to indicate how complaints in relation to gas gathering and processing facilities made under Part 4 or otherwise would be determined. As discussed on pages 14 to 15 of the Application, by Letter Decision L-64-96 dated December 10, 1996 the Commission established that complaint-based regulation would be appropriate for gas gathering and processing facilities and would take a form similar to an application under what is now Part 4 of the *UCA*. The Commission acknowledged at that time that it might be helpful to establish guidelines for complaint regulation but concluded that the effort of doing so "would not be time effective... at this time."<sup>7</sup>
14. Since 1996, circumstances have not required the Commission to develop or provide further guidance on the criteria to be applied if such a complaint is made or on the resulting process. The language adopted in most of the exemption orders issued since 1996 has been as follows:

"The facilities identified in Appendix I will continue to be regulated under the Act on a complaint basis, with a complaint taking a form similar to that of an application by an interested Party under the Common Carrier and Common Processor sections of Part 4 of the Act with respect to a facilities operated by a person declared to be a common carrier or common processor."

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<sup>5</sup> *UCA*, s. 67(4).

<sup>6</sup> *UCA*, s. 67(3).

<sup>7</sup> Commission Letter Decision L-64-96 dated December 10, 1996 at page 2.



15. Accordingly, there exists no well-defined guidance on how the Commission would resolve a complaint in relation to the use of provincially regulated facilities providing services similar to the Field Services Assets.
16. As explained by Mr. Hawksworth at the workshop and discussed below, Brookfield perceives significant uncertainty with proceeding with the acquisition of the Field Services Assets in the absence of clarity as to how the Commission would resolve a complaint in relation to the use of the Field Services Assets if a complaint is ever made. This uncertainty is unique to this situation where, if the transaction closes, the Field Services Assets will move from an existing federal regulatory regime with a well-defined framework, to provincial jurisdiction where there is currently very limited guidance.

**4. THE PROPOSAL TO ADOPT PARTS OF THE WESTCOAST FRAMEWORK WILL NOT NEGATIVELY IMPACT CUSTOMERS**

17. The requested Order does not propose to adopt the existing Westcoast Framework in its entirety.
18. First, as Mr. Bissett explained at the workshop, much of the existing Westcoast Framework was specific to the circumstances of Westcoast in 1998 and was designed to encourage competition in gas gathering and processing services to flourish. Certain provisions of the Fair Dealing section are focused on matters between the regulated Westcoast and its unregulated affiliates with the purpose of fostering competition. The Asset Utilization and Disposition Policy and the Interconnection Policy addressed similar matters. Clearly, if NorthRiver Midstream completes the acquisition of the Field Services Assets, these assets will no longer be owned or controlled by Westcoast such that these provisions would no longer be relevant.
19. Second, the growth of competition within the gas processing and gathering business in the British Columbia and other developments in the marketplace since 1998 have rendered redundant some of the provisions in the original Westcoast Framework. For instance the need for standardized contracts or group negotiations has been overtaken

by the development of a robust, competitive industry with numerous suppliers providing services in the sector.

20. Accordingly, the Application did not propose to adopt every provision of the 20-year-old Westcoast Framework, and the customers know that NorthRiver Midstream is requested that only portions of the Westcoast Framework carry over under provincial jurisdiction and have not raised any concerns whatsoever.
21. In late 2018 and early 2019, Westcoast sought conditional assignment and novation agreements (“**A&N Agreements**”) with each of its approximately 40 customers utilizing the Field Services Assets. Each A&N Agreement provides the consent of the customer to the assignment of their specific service contracts from Westcoast to NorthRiver Midstream upon closing of the transaction. The customers were under no obligation to accept a new owner and operator as a counterparty to their service contracts but, with a few exceptions,<sup>8</sup> they have consented to the upcoming change and have entered into an A&N Agreement.
22. At the workshop, Commissioner Loski asked (and NorthRiver Midstream committed to address in its final submission) whether the customers have a contractual right to the Westcoast Framework and, if so, whether the requested Order might cause a change to their contractual rights without the customer's consent. Westcoast has advised that only a limited number of its existing service contracts originally contained provisions that incorporated the Westcoast Framework by reference. These particular service contracts and all other Westcoast service contracts that did not contain provisions incorporating the Westcoast Framework by reference were the subject of the A&N Agreements. In addition to consenting and agreeing to assignment of their service contracts to NorthRiver Midstream upon closing of the transaction, in each A&N

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<sup>8</sup> The few customers that have not yet signed an A&N Agreement have not done so because they either (i) have contracts that will expire before the transaction closes and do not anticipate requiring future services from NorthRiver Midstream; or (ii) while not being opposed to NorthRiver Midstream stepping in as operator do not provide consents such as those contained in the A&N Agreement as a matter of corporate policy prior to the underlying transaction closing.

Agreement the customer also specifically acknowledged and agreed that “the [Westcoast] Framework will cease to apply to all Services” being provided under the service contracts. Accordingly, upon closing of the transaction there will be no contractual right to the Westcoast Framework held by any customer as acknowledged and agreed to in the A&N Agreement.

23. The customers have been clearly advised that if the transaction is completed, the currently federally regulated Field Services Assets would come out of NEB regulation and that the Westcoast Framework as a regulatory construct would cease to exist.<sup>9</sup> Each customer has further specifically acknowledged and agreed in its A&N Agreement that the Westcoast Framework will cease to apply to all services provided by NorthRiver Midstream under its service contract.
24. As Mr. Bissett explained at the workshop, all customers have been advised that in anticipation of the facilities being transferred to provincial jurisdiction, NorthRiver Midstream would be applying to the Commission for an exemption from *UCA* Part 3 regulation and seeking a complaint-based regulatory regime that maintains for customers the ability to freely negotiate their service contracts.<sup>10</sup> The customers have also been provided with a copy of the Application, and have had numerous opportunities to review both the Application and the requested Order.
25. No customer has indicated to Westcoast, nor to NorthRiver Midstream nor to the Commission that it takes any exception whatsoever to any of the following matters:
  - NorthRiver Midstream acquiring the Field Service Assets;
  - the Field Services Assets moving from federal to provincial jurisdiction;
  - the Westcoast Framework ceasing to exist and apply; or

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<sup>9</sup> Workshop transcript, page 36, line 6 to page 37, line 22.

<sup>10</sup> Workshop transcript, page 33, lines 15 to 26, and pages 36 to 37.

- the Commission issuing the Order in the form that NorthRiver Midstream is seeking in this Application (i.e., including the Contracting Practices and Complaint Process).

## 5. OTHER MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE WORKSHOP

26. In light of the discussions at the workshop, NorthRiver Midstream has considered whether any of the wording in Appendices II and III of the Application could be removed or changed, or whether there are additional provisions of the Westcoast Framework that might be suitable to incorporate into an exemption Order.
27. Beginning with the Complaint Process set out in Appendix II, section 1 sets out the objectives of the process. Paragraph 1(b) was modified from the wording in the Westcoast Framework to refer to NorthRiver Midstream instead of Westcoast and to make reference to the principles set out in Appendix III. Commission staff asked a question about the deletion of the word “or” and whether that change was a limitation relative to the wording in the Westcoast Framework. NorthRiver Midstream's intent is for both customers and potential customers to have the opportunity to avail themselves of the Complaint Process. If the proposed words do not clearly achieve that objective, perhaps that intent would be clarified by substituting the words “customers or potential customers” for the word “person” in the first line of paragraph 1(b) and reinserting the word "or" after the words "Appendix III".
28. Commission staff also asked about the change to paragraph 9(b) of Appendix II which converts the "Parties belief" that written decisions from the NEB are beneficial, to what might be seen as a mandatory requirement for the Commission to issue written decisions. Like the parties to the Westcoast Framework, NorthRiver Midstream believes that written decisions are desirable and hopes that if the Commission agrees it will issue written decisions in the event of a complaint. However, NorthRiver Midstream recognizes that whether or not to require the Commission to do so as a condition of the Order is something that is up to the discretion of the Commission. A change of the word “will” to “may” in paragraph 9(b) is not integral to the Application.

29. At the workshop Mr. Bissett also elaborated on why two of the six parts of the Westcoast Framework were adopted in the requested Order. Paragraphs 15 to 18 of this submission, above, summarizes his elaboration. Subsequent review by NorthRiver Midstream has not indicated that incorporation of any further parts of the Westcoast Framework would be desirable. NorthRiver Midstream's position in this connection is underscored by the fact that the customers have not asked for additional portions of the Westcoast Framework to be included in the Order.
30. There was also a question at the workshop by Commission staff related to whether the requested Order would "fetter" the Commission's discretion in respect of any complaint that may arise in respect of the Field Services Assets. NorthRiver Midstream respectfully submits that the purpose of an Order under section 88(3) of the *UCA* is to specify, in a legally binding Order, the provisions of the *UCA* that will not apply and those that will or could be applied (and any associated conditions) to a person in circumstances where full *UCA* Part 3 regulation is not warranted nor appropriate. That an exemption under section 88(3) is provided by legally binding Order means that the Commission jurisdiction and discretion will be excluded to the extent specified in the Order, such that the person to whom the Order applies may operate the subject facilities and provide services on a negotiated, free market basis. NorthRiver Midstream does, however, recognize that an exemption from Part 3 of the *UCA* does not include exemption from section 99 of the *UCA* (which is in Part 7). Section 99 provides the Commission with the power to reconsider, vary or rescind an order made by it. Accordingly, the Order requested in the Application would not exclude the Commission's discretion to exercise its powers under section 99 in the future if circumstances have fundamentally changed and reconsideration and variance is warranted. However, the power to reconsider and vary in the future if warranted by fundamentally changed circumstances does not remove the present need for certainty as to both the principles and process that will be applied, unless and until circumstances fundamentally change. This Application seeks such certainty.

## 6. THE REQUESTED ORDER IS CRITICAL TO COMPLETING THE TRANSACTION

31. The closing of the transaction for NorthRiver Midstream to acquire the Field Services Assets is subject to various conditions including the receipt of each of the regulatory approvals and exemptions as described on pages 4 to 6 of the Application. Specific to the context of this Application, the required approvals and exemptions include an order pursuant to section 88(3) of the *UCA* exempting both NorthRiver Midstream (and any related entity) and the Field Services Assets from all of the provisions of Part 3 of the *UCA* with all facilities to be regulated under the *UCA* on a complaint basis, with a complaint taking the form of a written application to the Commission from a person whose interests are affected, with such additional reasonable conditions or reasonable related orders as NorthRiver Midstream may include in its application to the Commission.
32. Thus, receipt of the Order requested in the Application (potentially as modified in accordance with the submissions in section 5, above) is a condition to the transaction closing. Receipt of the Order in the form requested is important to NorthRiver Midstream and particularly critical to its ultimate parent, Brookfield because this transaction uniquely involves uncertainty and potentially risk related to historical gas gathering and processing assets moving from federal jurisdiction to provincial jurisdiction as discussed above.
33. Mr. Hawksworth said at the workshop that it is paramount that there is no new risk put on the Field Services Assets as a result of the move from federal to provincial jurisdiction.<sup>11</sup> Thus, were the Commission to recommend an exemption in respect of the Field Services Assets that does not clearly set out how the Commission would resolve a complaint in relation to the use of the Field Services Assets if a complaint was ever made, this would create uncertainty and risk concerning the business environment in which NorthRiver Midstream would be operating. Brookfield and NorthRiver Midstream

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<sup>11</sup> Workshop Transcript, page 25, lines 13 to 21.

have said that such increase in risk would be material to their consideration of whether or not to proceed with the transaction.

34. The multibillion dollar investment that Brookfield will be making if the acquisition of the Field Services Assets is to close and the importance of obtaining regulatory clarity to support its investment decision means that it is now time effective and indeed necessary to establish the guidelines setting out the process that will be employed by the Commission to hear any complaint that may arise in respect of the Field Services Assets and the substantive considerations that will govern the disposition of any complaint. The requested Order will also maintain the status quo by putting in place a Commission regulatory regime that is consistent with the competitive environment and complaint-based regime that the Field Services Assets are currently operating in.
35. Neither Brookfield nor NorthRiver Midstream assume that there will necessarily ever be a complaint to the Commission, nor do they assume that the Commission would necessarily impose a cost of service rate based on historical net book value costs in the event of a complaint.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, fixing a cost of service rate for services provided in a competitive environment with market-established rates where a potential customer has numerous cost-effective alternatives would not be workable because customers would be under no compulsion, economic or otherwise, to take the service from NorthRiver Midstream. They would simply utilize a readily available alternative. Accordingly, NorthRiver Midstream fully expects that any concern of a customer or a person that seeks to become a customer would be resolved through negotiation. However, in the absence of the requested Order, a complainant could argue for a cost of service rate based on historical net book value costs and the Commission could be obliged to consider such argument. Such form of regulation would be fundamentally at odds with the basis upon which Brookfield and NorthRiver Midstream are prepared to acquire the Field Services Assets (subject to satisfaction of the specified closing conditions). The

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<sup>12</sup> Workshop Transcript, pages 25 to 27.

multibillion dollar investment that Brookfield will be making if the acquisition of the Field Services Assets closes has been based not on the historical net book value of the Field Services Assets but rather on their market value based on the assumption that those facilities will continue to operate in a competitive market environment. As Mr. Hawksworth and Mr. Bissett explained at the workshop, Brookfield and NorthRiver Midstream want to ensure that any possibility of cost of service rates based on historical net book value being imposed in the future, however remote that possibility might be, is taken off the table<sup>13</sup> in order to support a decision by Brookfield to complete the transaction.

36. Moreover, NorthRiver Midstream does not believe that it is asking the Commission to include in the Order any policy the Commission has not employed in the past; it is only asking the Commission to do it expressly and transparently to provide the necessary certainty for NorthRiver Midstream and Brookfield to move forward.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

37. The Application seeks to adopt in the requested Order those portions of the Westcoast Framework that are relevant today in light of the evolution of the gas gathering and processing marketplace since 1998 and that will remain relevant after NorthRiver Midstream replaces Westcoast as owner/operator of the Field Services Assets. Issuing the requested Order would transparently signal the Commission's express acceptance of the regulatory process and principles that will be employed if NorthRiver Midstream and its customer or potential customer cannot work out their differences commercially, and serves the objectives of NorthRiver Midstream and the customers which will utilize the Field Service Assets.
38. The requested Order maintains the status quo for customers by adopting those portions of the Westcoast Framework that are relevant today and which are familiar to them,

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



and which will remain relevant after NorthRiver Midstream replaces Westcoast as owner/operator. These customers are sophisticated commercial parties.

39. NorthRiver Midstream respectfully submits that adopting the process and the principles that it requests be incorporated into the Order will also provide the clarity that the Commission stated would be beneficial in 1996. NorthRiver Midstream does not believe it is asking the Commission to include in the Order any policy the Commission has not implicitly accepted in the past; it is only asking the Commission to do it expressly and transparently to provide the necessary certainty.
40. Brookfield and NorthRiver Midstream's decision to complete the acquisition of the Field Services Assets is, among other things, conditional on receipt of the Order in the form requested in the Application, and no customer has indicated to Westcoast, nor to NorthRiver Midstream nor to the Commission that it takes any exception whatsoever to the Commission issuing the requested Order.
41. An exemption order that failed to provide the requested guidance concerning the process the Commission would use and the principles it would apply to resolve any disputes between NorthRiver Midstream and its customers would introduce a new and unnecessary risk to the owner and operator of the facilities that would threaten the completion of the transaction. An exemption order that imported the entire Westcoast Framework would impose obsolete regulatory structures designed for different ownership and market conditions which would be neither necessary nor useful if the proposed transaction completes.
42. NorthRiver Midstream respectfully submits that there is no reason for the Commission to recommend an approach other than that requested in the Application.

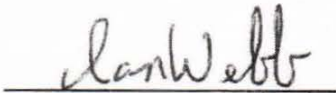
43. NorthRiver Midstream has indicated in section 5, above, two wording changes in Appendix II that would be consistent with its intent and has no objection to them. Otherwise it respectfully asks the Commission to grant the Application as filed.

**ALL OF WHICH IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS 27<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2019.**

Counsels for NorthRiver Midstream Operations LP and  
NorthRiver Midstream Operations GP Inc.



Chris W. Sanderson



Ian D. Webb