

Media Advisory

February 26, 2019

Mackenzie Valley
Review Board



Mackenzie Valley Review Board has decided to conduct an environmental assessment on Diavik's proposal to put processed kimberlite into mined-out pits and underground mine workings.

YELLOWKNIFE, NT. – The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (Review Board) has decided to conduct an environmental assessment (EA) on activities proposed by Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. (Diavik), namely, Diavik's proposal to put processed kimberlite into a mined-out pit (or pits) and underground mine workings. The Review Board is doing this using its authority under subsection 126(3) of the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (the *Act*).

Diavik's mined-out pits are behind a dike in Lac de Gras. Diavik's 1999 approval and current closure plan require it to fill its mined-out pits with freshwater, and then breach the dikes that surround the pits, so that the pits become part of Lac de Gras. In its current water licence amendment application to the Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board (WLWB), **Diavik proposes to put processed kimberlite, a mine waste, into the pits and underground, and cover the processed kimberlite with water before fully breaching the dikes. This will connect the pits to Lac de Gras.**

The Review Board believes that the evidence from the WLWB process to date leaves a few important unanswered questions about the potential impacts of this new activity in an ecologically and culturally sensitive setting. **The Review Board has concluded that the proposed activities might be a cause of significant adverse impacts on the environment and might be a cause of public concern.** This is because:

- Diavik's 1999 **approval didn't consider what impacts could result** from this, if the risks are acceptable, or how to mitigate any impacts from this.
- Putting processed kimberlite in the pits and underground would be likely **permanent and irreversible**.
- **Restoring the pits to include productive fish habitat** within Lac de Gras was an important part of the CEAA decision to approve the Diavik project in 1999.
- The potential impacts of the proposed changes on **traditional use of Lac de Gras** and Indigenous cultural values need careful consideration.
- The potential impacts of connecting pits containing processed kimberlite to Lac de Gras might add to **the cumulative effects** from other activities at the Diavik and Ekati mines. This **might affect water quality, fish and wildlife**.

These potential impacts will be fully considered through an environmental assessment so that they can be mitigated appropriately, if necessary. **This will help ensure that depositing processed kimberlite in pits, as Diavik proposed, does not result in unintended and unacceptable impacts to Lac de Gras after the mine is closed.**

To ensure a focussed, effective, and efficient EA, the Review Board will coordinate its environmental assessment with the Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board's regulatory process for these activities. The process will include fair opportunities for public involvement. A draft scoping document and a coordinated work plan for the Review Board's environmental assessment and the Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board's regulatory process will be circulated for public review.

Detailed reasons for this decision are on the Review Board's website at reviewboard.ca. For more information, contact Mark Cliffe-Phillips, Executive Director (mcliffephillips@reviewboard.ca; (867) 766-7055).