

# **MVEIRB Community Scoping Hearing De Beers Canada Inc.**

## **Opening Remarks**

### **Introductions and Acknowledgements**

Good morning, Chiefs, Elders, Madame Chair and Board members, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Maxwell Morapeli

My comments will be brief as there is important work to be done today.

I would like to begin by thanking you for providing De Beers the opportunity to speak today, but also for providing De Beers the opportunity to participate in the Community Scoping Workshops.

I would like to thank Martin and all the MVEIRB staff for their efforts in carrying out the scoping sessions.

In particular, I would like to thank the communities of Dettah, Lutsel K'e, Deninu Kué, Behchoko and the participants who attended for their warm welcoming of us into their communities, sharing with us their issues and concerns about the Gahcho Kué project.

### **Working with Communities**

De Beers looks forward over the coming months in working with communities on the issues that they have raised about the Gahcho Kué project.

We are eager to get into the communities to continue that dialogue and to hear more about community issues and suggestions for improving the Gahcho Kué project; specifically the ways in which we can address those potential impacts.

We think that such meetings provide a good opportunity to further our goal of sustainability in that it assists in balancing economic development with social and environmental drivers.

### **Community Scoping Hearing**

In closing, I would like to say thank you again for involving De Beers in this process.

Today we will not be sharing a presentation with you today since this has been done within the community and at the Technical Scoping Workshop and Hearing.

We certainly look forward to hearing from the communities present today.

Masi Cho Madame Chair.

## Closing Remarks

Members, elders, ladies and gentleman. We have listened with great interest throughout our participation today. The Community's Scoping Workshops held in Dettah, Lutsel K'e, Fort Resolution, Behchoko and also at the Technical Issues Scoping Workshop and Hearing held last month.

Overall our experience was that all these sessions demonstrated many northern values: a hearty welcome to the community, open sharings of views that come from the heart, and mutual respect, even when difficult issues were expressed and the experience of being brought together in sharing a meal.

We feel that the scoping process was very valuable in that it provided an opportunity for all Parties, including us, to increase project understand at an early stage of the assessment. We think that this will be very valuable as the process goes on. It's also provided healthy debate and discussion on issues that are very important to people. But perhaps most of all it was of immense value to get people together to talk. We certainly look forward to spending more time like that.

Many of the issues that we heard were those issues were common to resource development across the north or reflect ongoing or current concerns with current mines or some abandoned sites and we certainly heard that a number of times today. We understand the legacy of mining in the north. Others were certainly Gahcho Kué project specific concerns, related to the biophysical or human environment.

On a number of occasions people stated that they are not against this project. They want to ensure that ultimately the project occurs within the frame work of sustainable development specifically that they experience economic benefits and that the air, land, water, wildlife and people and well being of people especially are protected.

Moreover they stated that there needs to be a through assessment of the project so that first and foremost potential impacts are identified, then ways to minimize or avoid the negative impacts and maximize the positive impacts are identified for implementation.

We whole heartedly agree. To do so will deprive stake holders and regulators with the information essential to informed decision making.

The question then becomes under what process should it occur? Should it be environmental assessment or should it be impact review.

This isn't necessary an easy question. In part we consider that the option of environmental impact review has been muddied by a linkage with intervener funding.

Board staff has actively promoted the linkage that if the project is referred to environmental impact review then there will be intervener funding.

We very respectfully submit that the two should be de-linked.

We want to make sure that we recognize that need for fulsome participation by communities and understanding of the importance of intervener funding to allow that. So we are very clear on that.

To that end we think that the Board should continue its efforts with the Federal government and secure funding for environmental assessment.

De Beers submits to the Board that the project should undergo environmental assessment rather than environmental impact review for two other equally important reasons.

First of all we're not clear that possible referral to environmental impact review in the absence of completion of an environmental assessment conforms with the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* and we certainly seek clarity and assurance on that.

Secondly we think that through environmental assessment is necessary to objectively determine or establish whether there is evidence of significant adverse environmental impacts or public concern as required by the Impact. In other words we think that we need to go through and environmental impact assessment. We know that issues will be identified; we know that some issues will be removed from the table as through working together we are able to identify mitigation steps.

Ultimately our goal is that it is in the interest of all Parties that at if determined at the end of a thorough inclusive assessment that the project should proceed that any permits are issued on a robust legal foundation but also that Parties will concur that there has been inclusive informed participation. We realize that this puts the Board in a difficult position its analogous to having you cake and eating it to and we appreciate the difficulty that this puts them in.

We want to make sure that the Board is aware that we will do our share. We know the value of site visits, workshops and face to face meetings to discuss issues to identify potential mitigation measures and we will work to facilitate these on an ongoing basis. We look forward to the next steps of the process that the Board decides on.

Like many Parties here today we eagerly anticipate the Terms of Reference and look forward to working with all Parties through this process. I think that we have heard a number of people today say that everybody is looking forward to getting to the meat of the process and we concur with that and look forward to it. So thank you very much ladies and gentlemen and chair of the Board.