


Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board

May 8, 2006

Mike Vaydik
Executive Director
NWT Chamber of Mines
P.O. Box 2818
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2R1


Dear Mr. Vaydik;

Re: Community Scoping Workshops and Hearing for Gahcho Kue Diamond Mine

This letter is in response to your letter of April 28, 2006. It also makes reference to your letter of February 17, 2006 and your phone conversation with Mr. Martin Haefele on April 26, 2006.

The MVEIRB's environmental assessment process is designed to be a transparent and public process as you know. All events that have taken place in the assessment to date have been open to the public, including business organizations.

The commencement of the Gahcho Kue Diamond Mine environmental assessment (EA) was advertised in the NewsNorth newspaper in January 2006. The current distribution list is comprised of organizations and individuals who have expressed their interest in being on the list to the MVEIRB. None of the organizations you mention in your letter have expressed such an interest. To be added to the distribution list an organization or individual should contact Mr. Martin Haefele at 766-7053 or mhaefele@mveirb.nt.ca.

As you probably are aware, in previous environmental assessments the public participation in scoping and developing a terms of reference was limited to commenting on draft terms of reference. For this assessment the MVEIRB decided to increase the level of public participation substantially by conducting workshops and hearings in advance of developing a draft terms of reference. This intention was communicated through the Board's work plan issued on February 22, 2006. The work plan, which included input from several organizations, including the developer, was circulated to the distribution list and posted on our online registry the same day.

The scoping exercise held through March and April was to identify the environmental issues to focus on during the environmental assessment of the proposed diamond mine. The scoping exercise was in no way intended to make any decisions regarding approval of the project, to determine likelihood or significance of impacts, or to design any mitigation measures. In particular it was not intended as a forum to discuss support or opposition to the project; nor did it serve as such.

The Review Board originally planned one technical workshop in Yellowknife and a total of three community workshops, one in the Akaitcho region, one in the T'licho, and one in the Yellowknife area. It chose Lutsel K'e, Behchoko, and Dettah respectively as the location for the community workshops. A fourth community workshop was later added in Fort Resolution to better cover the area south of Great Slave Lake where travel distances are considerably greater.

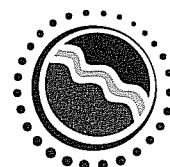
The assessment of the Diavik diamond mine provides a successful example of public meetings in Dettah that involved Yellowknife residents as well. More recently Yellowknife residents participated in a scoping session for the Tyhee Yellowknife Gold Project held in Dettah. In the current assessment several Yellowknife residents participated in the workshop in Behchoko. Similarly, residents of Fort Smith and Hay River participated in the workshop in Fort Resolution. Many of the concerns brought forward during the scoping exercise by government representatives, the developer itself, Metis and First Nations people are the same, regardless of where they reside. The Review Board is therefore confident that the scoping exercise was successful in identifying the main issues to be addressed in the environmental assessment of the proposed Gahcho Kue diamond mine.

Nonetheless, the Review Board recognizes that this process differed significantly from previous processes, that changes to dates and locations were made on short notice, and that although the environmental assessment itself was advertised and the distribution list was kept informed, individual events may not have been advertised as widely as they could have been. While the Review Board supports your statement that the environmental assessment process should be expeditious, it may have to re-evaluate the speed with which it proceeds in order to avoid situations similar to this one.

Please also accept our apologies for not posting your February 17 letter on our online registry. Our office had no knowledge of the letter until your April 26 conversation with Mr. Martin Haefele and no record of it until you re-submitted it on May 2, 2006. We are currently investigating how our mail log system could have missed this correspondence.

We are at the beginning of this environmental assessment and there are many future opportunities to provide comments to the Review Board. The Chamber of Mines, as well as any of the groups listed in your April 28 letter, are welcome to participate. Any organization wishing to actively participate in the assessment should request party status.

The appropriate form is attached to this letter.



The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board is looking forward to working with the Chamber of Mines throughout the environmental assessment process.

Sincerely



Vern Christensen
Executive Director

CC: Bob Overvold, RDG
INAC NWT Region

John Clark, Executive Director
NWT Chamber of Commerce

Don Worrall, Executive Director
NWT Construction Association

Marino Casebeer, Executive Director
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Attachment:

