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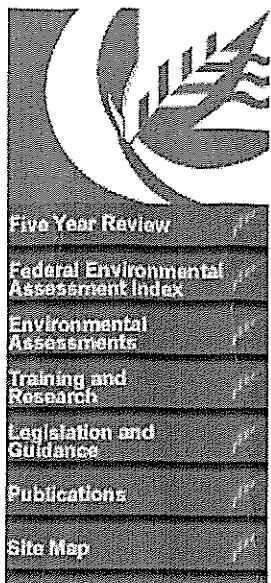
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(via e-mail)

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# News Release

## Minister of the Environment Sends Diavik Diamonds Project to Regulatory Phase

**OTTAWA, November 3, 1999** - Minister of the Environment David Anderson has concluded that with the implementation of all of the mitigation measures identified in the comprehensive study report, the proposed Diavik Diamonds Project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects. The Minister also concluded that public concerns do not warrant further environmental assessment of this project by a review panel. Minister Anderson informed the ministers of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Natural Resources and Fisheries and Oceans of his decision in a letter dated November 1, 1999.

"Public consultation on the Diavik diamond mine proposal has been extensive, totaling over 300 meetings. Eighteen months were taken to review the proponent's environmental assessment. Throughout, this process has been open and inclusive, valuing public participation. Steps were taken to fully involve all interested parties and address issues," Minister Anderson said. "I fully support the conclusions of the environmental assessment report prepared by the federal responsible authorities for the project. While a referral to a review panel is not warranted, I have concluded that in order to address concerns raised through public consultation and views expressed by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, specific commitments are warranted. These commitments will also contribute to further reducing any residual environmental effects," the Minister added.

These commitments specify that:

1. a regional cumulative effects management framework, in which the project proponent will participate, will be designed and implemented. All appropriate federal, territorial and Aboriginal governments, regulatory agencies, non-governmental organizations, as well as appropriate industry, including Diavik, should be involved in the design and implementation of the management framework.

This framework must consider both scientific and traditional knowledge, and be used in conjunction with adaptive management to ensure sustainable development, as suggested in comments by the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board and others. An action plan to finalize the framework should be developed with interested parties and presented to ministers by March 31, 2000, and the final framework should be implemented by April 1, 2001;

2. related to this, and in conjunction with the regional cumulative effects

management framework, the responsible authorities and Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure that monitoring of the Diavik operation occurs. The monitoring mechanism should involve Aboriginal peoples. Given the multi-year nature of the project, regular reports should be prepared by Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. and submitted to the responsible authorities with respect to project activities and how public concerns are being addressed. These monitoring activities should also be integrated into the overall regional cumulative effects management framework;

3. federal regulatory approvals ensure that Diavik's abandonment and restoration plan, referred to in the comprehensive study report and submitted by Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. as part of the regulatory approvals process, be revised, adapted, and approved as necessary over the life of the mine. The abandonment and restoration plan should be based on new information and technology as well as regulatory requirements so that the project will be abandoned incrementally, in a manner consistent with sustainable development.

Minister Anderson also concluded that the design and the implementation of a follow-up program, to determine the effectiveness of measures taken to mitigate any adverse environmental effects and to verify the accuracy of the environmental assessment of the project, was warranted.

The Minister took his decision in full consideration of the comprehensive study report, all public comments received, including those from Aboriginal organizations, as well as the response by federal responsible authorities on public comments and the views of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board.

Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Robert Nault, on behalf of the federal responsible authorities, is pleased with the Minister of the Environment's decision and that the Diavik Diamonds Project may now proceed to the regulatory phase. "The Diavik Diamonds Project has the support of the Government of Canada. The responsible authorities are confident that, with the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the Comprehensive Study report, the project will have no significant adverse environmental effects," Minister Nault said.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will assume the lead in seeing that these mitigation measures, together with the specific commitments identified by the Minister of the Environment, are implemented through the terms and conditions of regulatory instruments or through agreements with the proponent.

"The Diavik project is important, not only for the Northwest Territories, but for all of Canada. Northerners stand to realize very significant direct benefits from job creation and business opportunities," said Minister Nault.

The next step in this process is a regulatory phase whereby the appropriate licences, permits and agreements are provided so that the development of the project is done in an environmentally sound manner, based on the Minister of the Environment's determination and the recommendations and conclusions in the comprehensive study report. These requirements will be met through the terms and conditions of the project's water licence, land lease, *Fisheries Act* authorization, explosives licence, *Navigable Waters Protection Act* permit and the Environmental and Socio-economic agreements.

### The Project

Diavik Diamonds Project is a proposal by Rio Tinto and Aber Diamond Mines Ltd. to mine four diamond deposits in the Lac de Gras region about 300 kilometres northeast of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. The projected mine life is expected to be 16 to 22 years. The operating phase is expected to employ about 400 people.

### Socio-economic Monitoring Agreement

The proponent, Diavik Diamond Mines Inc., announced on October 1, 1999 that it entered a Socio-economic Monitoring Agreement with the government of the Northwest Territories. The Agreement addresses several of a number of recommendations contained in the comprehensive study report for the project prepared by the federal responsible authorities. It formalizes socio-economic commitments made by the proponent and recommendations arising from the comprehensive study report.

### Environmental Assessment

Environmental assessment is a planning tool used to identify possible adverse effects of development projects on the environment - the air, water, land and living organisms, including human populations. By eliminating or reducing these effects, project proponents can avoid expensive, and sometimes controversial corrective action once the project has been completed.

### Regional Cumulative Effects Management Framework

Development places stress on the relatively undisturbed and unpolluted ecosystems of the North. Various agencies have been working for some time to develop an environmental management framework for the NWT. Such a framework will be a proactive measure to protect the health of the environment and those that depend on it, while supporting timely development and resource management decisions.

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