

CBC & CJCD Radio News – August 26, 2002

Mackenzie Valley Land & Water Board Cancels Can Tung Mine Water Licence

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CBC: The owner of the Can Tung Mine is going to court to fight an order for an environmental assessment. The mine is located on the Yukon/NWT border just 40 kilometres northwest of Nahanni National Park Reserve. In court documents filed last week, North American Tungsten claims the assessment will put it out of business resulting in the loss of 170 jobs, but the environmental groups who lobbied for the assessment are vowing it will take place. Julie Green reports:

GREEN: The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board decided not to renew the company's water licence. Instead, it ruled North American Tungsten needs a new one. The board then ordered the Can Tung Mine to undergo an environmental assessment. The mine reopened in January after being closed for 16 years. Just a few weeks later, more than 23,000 litres of fuel spilled during an accident. The spill confirmed the worst fears of environmental groups already lobbying against all forms of industrial development in the South Nahanni watershed. They argued North American Tungsten needed a new water licence, but for the company, an environmental assessment is a disaster. In an affidavit filed last week, President Udo Von Doran says he expects the assessment to take up to two years and cost as much as \$1.5 million. He says the delay and expense would put the mine out of business because it would be unable to fulfill a three-year contract to supply tungsten to Swedish and American companies. Von Doran argues the mine has had a water licence since 1975 and it's been renewed five times. He believes the land and water board has made a mistake. That's why he's asking for a judicial review of the decision. He'll make his case in September. Meanwhile, the land and water board has agreed to extend the mine's water licence for a year until September 2003 to cover the company's operations while the environmental assessment takes place. Julie Green, CBC News, Yellowknife.