

SENATE

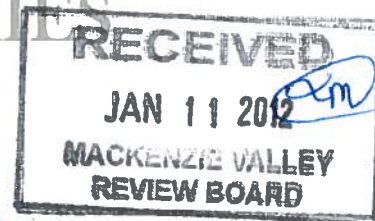


SÉNAT

The Honourable Nick G. Sibbeston

L'honorable Nick G. Sibbeston

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



January 4, 2012

COPY

The Honourable John Duncan
Minister, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Duncan,

On December 8th, 2011, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board concluded that the Canadian Zinc Prairie Creek Mine Project "is not likely to have adverse impacts on the environment or to be a cause for significant public concern." They, therefore, recommended that an environmental impact review was unnecessary and, most significantly, that the project "should proceed to the regulatory phase of approvals."

Not surprisingly, groups and organizations, such as Parks Canada and Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, who have long opposed this project are decrying the decision. Unfortunately, the Deh Cho First Nations have added their voice to this chorus. They are demanding a full environmental review and undoubtedly, if that review is not to their liking, will request some other hurdle be placed in the way of a project that has already met every challenge put before it in the ten years since Canadian Zinc began working toward this decision.

The implication in their opposition is that only a full environmental review will put in place the needed environmental protections, particularly for water. However, it is the Land and Water Board and not MVEIRB that establishes the conditions for water use and sets standards for effluent treatment and management. The Review Board made its decision based on the evidence presented to it, including the proponents plan for water use. It will be up to the Land and Water Board to establish the rules and subsequently enforce them. A full environmental review will, at best, merely delay the project or, at worst, make it uneconomical, which I suspect is the goal of those who object to the project.

I must point out that Canadian Zinc has reached Impact and Benefit Agreements with both the Liidlii Kue First Nation and the Nahanni Butte Dene Band, indicating that there is broad support for the project in the two communities which are nearest and will be most impacted by the mine. This project represents the first major economic development in this region in many years. The jobs and business opportunities it offers to First Nations youth and communities are critical to the future of the Deh Cho.

Reversing the decision of the MVEIRB would not only risk losing these opportunities but would also send a clear message to industry that development is not, in fact, welcome in the Deh Cho, despite assurances otherwise. In the end, actions speak louder than words.

I urge you to uphold the recommendation of the MVEIRB and allow this project to proceed to the regulatory phase of approvals. It will then be up to communities and interested stakeholders to work, along with the proponent, with the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board to ensure appropriate conditions are placed in permits and licenses to ensure economic development and environmental protection proceeds in a sustainable way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Sibbeston', written in a cursive style.

Nick Sibbeston

cc The Honourable Peter Kent, Minister of Environment
The Honourable Keith Ashfield, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
The Honourable Joe Oliver, Minister of Natural Resources Canada
The Honourable Bob McLeod, Premier NWT
Grand Chief Sam Gargan, DFN
Richard Ejericon, Chairperson, MVEIRB
Chuck Parker, President, NWT Chamber of Commerce
John Kearney, Chairman and President, Canadian Zinc Corporation
Chief Jim Antoine, Liidlii Kue First Nation
Chief Fred Tesou, Nahanni Butte First Nation
Marie Lafferty, President, Métis Nation Local #52