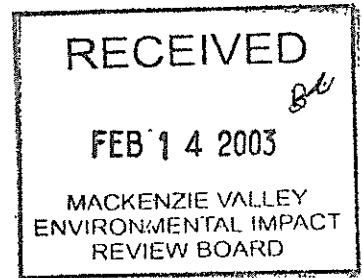


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Date: February 14, 2003
To: Gordon Wray, A/Chair
MVEIRB
Fax: (867) 766-7074
Pages: 3, including cover
Comments:

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February 14, 2003

Your file - Votre référence

BY FACSIMILE: (867) 766-7074

Our file - Notre référence

Gordon Wray
Acting Chairman
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
PO Box 938
YELLOWKNIFE, NT
X1A 2N7

Dear Mr. Wray:

Re: De Beers Canada Mining Inc. Snap Lake Diamond Project: recent submissions of technical memoranda and the environmental assessment process

As expressed to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (Board) on numerous occasions, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is concerned about the overall environmental assessment process for the Snap Lake Project and the timetable set by the Board to review technical documents provided by DeBeers Canada Mining Inc. (DCMI). As of January 31, 2003, DCMI has submitted important technical memoranda and has stated that additional memoranda and modelling results will be forthcoming in the upcoming weeks. At the same time, the Board is holding to the February 14, 2003, deadline for the submission of technical reports by reviewers. The Board suggests that if reviewers are unable to incorporate their analyses of the technical memoranda into their technical reports, they are to do so in a separate submission on February 21, 2003.

It is unrealistic to expect that reviewers could conduct a credible analysis of these documents within the suggested time frame of February 21st. It seems unlikely that reviewers will be able to review this additional material and provide their analyses prior to the pre-hearing conference and the hearings itself. This situation clearly has the potential to undermine both the technical validity of the review and the procedural fairness of the process itself. INAC supports the valid concern expressed by other reviewers that there is inadequate time to respond to the new information recently provided by DCMI. In our view, the schedule as it stands will not enable the required credible technical review so essential to a sound environmental assessment process.

INAC suggests the following options the Board may wish to consider:

1. The Board could extend the deadline for the submission of technical reports, following receipt of all outstanding memoranda from DCMI, for a time that would allow reviewers to complete their analysis and provide the Board with the credible information required; or

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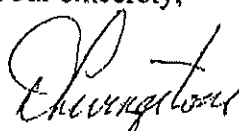
-2-

2. The Board could establish a reasonable period of time for reviewers to examine memoranda from DCMI as they arrive, essentially establishing a rolling review period with a subsequent roll-up of comments; or
3. The Board could stick to its current timetable and conduct the environmental assessment in an on-going manner.

The concerns raised by INAC and other reviewers regarding the time and, in some cases, the capacity to review the material provided by DCMI within the schedule established by the Board are serious ones. We look forward to the Board's decision as to how it plans to conduct the remainder of the environmental assessment in light of these concerns.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact myself at 669-2647 or Tamara Hamilton at 669-2616.

Your sincerely,



David Livingstone
Director, Renewable Resources and Environment

cc: Robin Johnstone, De Beers Canada Mining Inc.