

September 14th, 2012

Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Impact Review Board,

Re: Giant Mine Remediation Project

Dear Board Members,

My name is Caroline Lafontaine, I am a 10 year resident of Yellowknife. I sat at the public hearings for the Giant Mine Remediation Project for the first three days and a half, including evening meetings in Yellowknife and Dettah. I join my voice to the ones that were heard this week. I do recognize the amazing amount of work the various parties have accomplished to date and I am grateful for the work done so far. I do recognize the difficult task your Board has ahead too and pray for guidance for everyone of you.

I do have many concerns regarding the way the project has been and is being developed however. I will not express all of my concerns as they are too numerous and the were mentioned by other citizens. I do want to share the main ones however. I summarized them below, explained the reasons of my concerns and share what I would like to see in place to address them:

1. **Involvement of and communication with stakeholders:** I am surprised to find out that there is still discord between parties on issues of communication and partnership, and that groups have even been completely ignored. I consider hearing past and current concerns, as well as possible concerns of future generations, essential to building the best remediation plan possible.

The developer has expressed the wish to involve stakeholders and intends to do so from now on. During the last 12 years, the developer has failed in this area and has not demonstrated the knowledge and the ability to strengthen communications during the hearings.

In addition, the developer has not been able to gain my trust during the hearing the past few days as many aspect of the project are hypothetical. Solid action plans are not in place, including perpetual care plans. I also agree with the Yellowknives Dene and Alternative North, the ground for trust needs to be set and this comes with a formal apology and recognition of the damage done.

I feel binding measures with respect to public involvement and public trust is essential to this project as the developer wears many conflicting hats. I suggest that:

- a. The developer be bound to apologize formally;
- b. The past communication strategies be reviewed and critiqued and a solid communication strategy and public involvement strategy for all aspects of this project be established with stakeholders, during the next month;
- c. A strategy be in place to ensure the project is being developed in a holistic approach (working group that holds the vision beyond mandates and ensures all concerns, including concerns of future generations are considered);
- d. Funding needs to be secured for the involvement of all parties.

2. **Water quality:** I do not agree with the current water quality criteria used for water quality in Baker Creek (no criteria) and Yellowknife/Back Bay. They are not acceptable considering the current use of the water and perpetual nature of this project.

I am also aware there are people with special abilities in the aboriginal cultures that may be able to help with the decontamination of water; they should be consulted to investigate how they could support this remediation program.

I feel the developer needs to:

- a. Determine baseline and site specific objectives and plan water treatment to meet more stringent water quality objectives than what is currently proposed.
- b. Investigate other ways to release water that are not undermining traditional subsistence activities.
- c. Involve all stakeholders in the decision process relative to water quality issues.
- d. Explore alternative ways of decontaminating the water.

3. **Sediment quality** – Last year, I cleaned a section of the shoreline in Ndilo. My hands were in sediment for some time and after a while they were burning. There might be other reasons why my hands were burning, I agree, but I am still concerned about the sediment quality in areas that are accessible and that are not marked as potentially problematic to the public. Continued loading of sediment will likely continue to pollute areas that children and others can use. My request, even if YK Bay is not in the scope of this project, is that:

- a. Areas accessible for swimming, such as Ndilo shoreline, be assessed and remediated if deemed contaminated such that children can safely swim in the future.
 - b. A continuous public awareness campaign be initiated to inform the public about the current environmental quality and risks associated with recreational activities, particularly those where direct contact with sediment is possible.
- 4. **Independent Oversight:** I am concerned about the fact that the developer has responsibilities in various areas this project, including political decisions and legislations. These many hats prevent me to be confident in the developer's commitment to take the best decisions for now and the future. I urge the Board to recommend that an independent oversight to ensure transparency, accountability, the building of trust with the public and generations to come, and best decision making.
- 5. **Perpetual Care:** We are writing history today as this problem is unique and it requires perpetual care. I understand that the developer, in the last 12 years, has invested a lot of energy to investigate the best current strategies to deal with arsenic trioxide and remediate emergencies, with minimum involvement of various parties. From the presentation of the developer on perpetual care, we understand that little energy has gone into the long term aspect of the problem. A long term approach involving the public might have driven the remediation project differently. Therefore, I urge the Board to recommend binding measures for the following aspects of the project.
 - a. As mentioned above, a holistic vision and approach in the decision making process is necessary. The issues raised during the hearing around fish quality demonstrate the need for the creation of a working group/committee that has mandates (and funding) beyond current individual agency mandates. Disputes on whom is responsible is not acceptable for this project.
 - b. Considering that government priorities changes and the recent slashing in environmental resources and funds by the Federal Government, funding needs to be secured for the next 5000+ years. Alternative North mentioned that parties have already worked on 8 drafts of an environmental contract. I urge the Board to recommend that this contract be finalized and signed.
 - c. The developer presented the current project as a final and long-term option, with reviews every 10 years and a more extensive review in 100 years. This is not acceptable. The developer needs to commit to investment in research and development to actively find solution to the arsenic trioxide problem. This is a unique problem to the NWT. We cannot assume that others will further the research when no one will ever deal with a similar problem. The first step required is a gap analysis to identify where investment is required to find solutions to the problem.

- d. The developer words are still general with obvious lack of specific plans in many areas. I urge the Board to recommend specific timelines to complete various plans, including draft perpetual care plan and a transition plan.
- e. Finally, I wish to see included in the Environmental Management System, descriptions of public concerns with agreed upon objectives and target commitments. The way the project addresses past, current and future public concerns need to be evaluated.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views.

Caroline Lafontaine, Yellowknife resident

766-4143