

SENATE



SÉNAT

The Honourable Nick G. Sibbeston

L'honorable Nick G. Sibbeston

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

February 6, 2009

Mr. Alistair MacDonald
Senior Environmental Assessment Officer
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
200 Scotia Centre
Box 938, 5102-50th Ave
Yellowknife, NT
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Dear Mr. MacDonald,

I am writing with respect to the current process regarding the scoping of the environmental assessment for Canadian Zinc Corporation's applications to begin operations at the Prairie Creek mine.

I was the MLA for this region when the original mine, then called the Cadillac mine, received its Land Use Permit and Water Licence in the early 1980s. Although the process at the time was not as extensive as that used today, especially when it came to consulting and involving local communities, it was legitimate and led to the site being developed and prepared for operations. The mine was built, including the access road, and was only three months from beginning operations when a downturn in the economy resulted in the operation being mothballed.

Canadian Zinc Corporation (CZN) eventually purchased the mine and for the last 15 years has been diligently working to bring this mine into production. They have consulted communities, building up trust to the point where they now have several Memoranda of Understanding with impacted communities and groups. It takes a great deal of effort to win people's trust and persuade them that the mine will bring benefits to them while not causing harm to the land and water. It cannot be done without open and honest discussion and full disclosure. CZN should be commended for the efforts they have made in that regard.

They have also worked their way through permitting and licensing processes, which have often been delayed unduly by the interventions of southern environmental groups. Throughout this, CZN has demonstrated a great deal of patience and determination, responding to legitimate concerns and issues by refining and upgrading their proposals. In my view, their current plan would seem to have addressed many of the environmental concerns with the old mine, though, of course, that will be up to the MVEIRB to determine.

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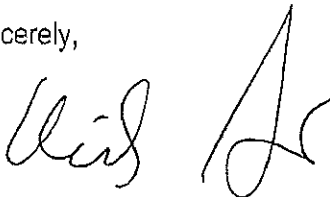
This history is important to keep in mind when determining the scope of the upcoming environmental assessment. The mine exists, the road exists and they have for over 20 years. More recently, work has been carried out under modern permitting and licensing provisions. What is now before the Board is a proposal to modernize and change the existing structures and bring the mine into operation in an environmentally sound and sustainable way.

In deciding the scope of a future assessment, the MVEIRB should not exercise "undue" diligence by including those elements that already exist and have already received approval. The focus should be on the changes being proposed; undistracted by the blizzard of submissions and complaints of individuals or groups who did not get everything they wanted in previous reviews. I am sure that it is the view of some environmentalists that if they can just delay the approval process long enough they can drive the proponents into bankruptcy and stop any development from ever happening.

The Board has a responsibility to permit the approval of developments through "quality environmental impact assessments that protect the environment and the social, economic and cultural well-being of the residents of the Mackenzie Valley and all Canadians." Protecting the environment is only one half of its mandate. The other half is the well-being, including the economic well-being, of residents. The Prairie Creek mine, once operating, will provide local jobs and economic opportunities for a minimum of 14 years, and quite possibly longer. More importantly, it will provide training and work experience to a whole generation in the Deh Cho.

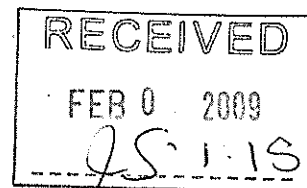
I have spent much of my life working to ensure local people have a say in development decisions, both so they can protect the environment but also so they can benefit economically from development as it occurs in their backyards. We now have the instruments in place, including the MVEIRB, to ensure this can happen. In determining the scope of the upcoming review, it is critical that both of these objectives be achieved so that environmentally sustainable development can proceed in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Sincerely,



Nick Sibbeston

c.c. Grand Chief Jerry Antoine
Marie Lafferty, President, Fort Simpson Métis Nation
Chief Fred Tesou, Nahanni Butte Dene Band
Chief Kenya Norwegian, Liidli Kue First Nation



Senate of Canada

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