



May 17, 2006

Bill Enge,  
President  
North Slave Metis Alliance  
PO Box 2301  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7

Dear Mr. Enge:

**Re: Community Scoping Workshops and Hearing for the DeBeers Gahcho Kue Diamond Mine Environmental Assessment**

This letter is in response to your letter of April 27, 2006. It also makes reference to our letter of April 11, 2006, responding to your letter of April 7, 2006, as well as an e-mail by Mr. Martin Haebele to Sheryl Grieve of your organization on April 4, 2006.

The MVEIRB's environmental assessment process is designed to be a transparent and public process. However meetings, workshops, or hearings conducted as part of an environmental assessment should not be confused with government consultation designed to address its fiduciary responsibilities.

While government may use the environmental assessment process to address part of its obligations, the MVEIRB consultation process strives for broad public participation rather than one of consultation with individual groups. As you are probably aware, all workshops and hearings that have taken place in the assessment to date have been open to the public.

In previous environmental assessments public participation in scoping and developing a terms of reference was limited to commenting on a draft terms of reference. For this assessment the MVEIRB decided to increase the level of public participation substantially by conducting workshops and hearings in advance of developing a draft terms of reference. The Review Board further decided to distinguish between 'technical' events, aimed largely at government and other organizations with relevant technical expertise, and 'community' events, aimed at community groups and the public at large. The Review Board did not, however, conduct any events aimed at one specific group, organization or community.

The Review Board originally planned a total of three community workshops, one in the Akaitcho region, one in the T'licho, and one in the Yellowknife area. It chose Lutsel

K'e, Behchoko, and Dettah respectively as the location for the workshops. NSMA members were welcome to attend any of these workshops, specifically the one in Dettah, which did not require substantial travel. This was communicated to the NSMA in an e-mail on April 4, 2006. A fourth workshop was later added in Fort Resolution to better cover the area south of Great Slave Lake where travel distances are considerably greater.

Metis residents have participated in the scoping exercise and made significant contributions. Representatives of the NSMA participated in the technical scoping workshop and made a presentation to the Board at the subsequent technical scoping hearing in Yellowknife. NSMA members also participated very actively in the community scoping workshop in Behchoko. Moreover Metis individuals residing in Fort Resolution, Hay River, and Fort Smith participated in the workshop in Fort Resolution. Finally, the NSMA made a presentation to the Board during the community scoping hearing also held in Yellowknife.

The Review Board recognizes that, as you pointed out in your presentation at the community scoping hearing, the members of the NSMA face unique challenges. Nevertheless, many of the concerns brought forward during the scoping exercise by Metis and First Nation people were similar. The Review Board is therefore confident that the scoping exercise was successful in identifying the main issues to be addressed in the environmental assessment of the proposed Gahcho Kue diamond mine.

The scoping exercise was in no way intended to make any decisions regarding approval of the project, to determine likelihood or significance of impacts, or to design any mitigation measures. It was to identify the main environmental issues to be addressed in the assessment. The NSMA, by participating in two workshops and presenting at both hearings, has made a significant contribution towards achieving this purpose.

The NSMA is a party to this environmental assessment and is expected to continue to actively participate in the process. The NSMA will have opportunity to comment on the draft terms of reference. It will also have opportunity to submit information requests and it will be able to participate in any technical sessions and hearings that may be conducted during the assessment. Moreover, the NSMA, and its individual members are welcome to submit any additional concerns to the Review Board in writing at any time.

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board is looking forward to working with the NSMA and its members throughout the environmental assessment of the proposed Gahcho Kue diamond mine.

Sincerely



Vern Christensen

Executive Director

