



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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Rick Laliberte
Churchill River

28 September 1999

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Reçu UCM MDE

Hon. David Anderson, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Environment
Rm. 133 East Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

RE: CEAA Panel Review / Diavik

Dear Minister Anderson;

The Diavik Diamonds Project presents an important step towards economic development in the North. The proposed project is a key component in an expanding resource industry that will play a vital role in improving the lives of Northern Canadians. At the same time it is an industry that will require extensive support infrastructure that includes all-weather roads and hydroelectric developments.

As Canada's Environment Minister, you are no doubt aware that such development in sensitive northern ecosystems requires a complete assessment of immediate and cumulative effects, alternative resource extraction methods, socio-economic impacts on communities, and projected impacts on wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

There have been a series of misunderstandings throughout the Diavik approval process. These procedural differences include several DIAND decisions that may not have taken into consideration the federal government responsibilities under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. The Act is about to undergo its mandatory review next year, and I believe we share the concern that there are sufficient examples of poor CEAA reviews and short-sighted decisions that have evolved into protracted and costly court exercises. Poor decisions hinder development and lead to uncertainty and delays that are counterproductive to investment.

As we enter the next century we must ensure that the errors in environmental assessment that contribute to ecosystem degradation and loss of habitat are not repeated. The North has witnessed a series of such resource industry errors; abandoned sites, contaminated waters and diminished access to traditional sources of country foods. The Diavik Diamonds Project will impact the headwaters of the Coppermine River and critical habitat for the Bathurst Caribou, including migration corridors.

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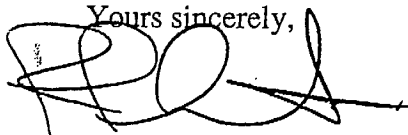
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I urge you to refer this project to a panel review under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. The North deserves Canada's highest standards for environmental protection that is incorporated into the economic development decision making process. As the responsible Minister, it is your duty to ensure that communities can flourish in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner that will not adversely effect future generations that rely upon nature for physical and spiritual sustenance.

It is imperative that we "get the process right" as the North embarks on expanding Canada's diamond extraction industry in the next century. At no other time in recent history has there existed such an opportunity to provide vision and leadership that would identify and correct potential environmental impacts before they occur.

Your decision on the Diavik Project will demonstrate this government's commitment to the environment. A Panel Review will set the parameters for a conscientious environmental assessment that can serve as a template for proposed diamond projects that will follow Diavik in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RL', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rick Laliberte, MP
NDP Environment Spokesperson

Cc/ Louise Hardy, MP
Canadian Arctic Resources Committee
On file