



Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee

February 20, 2006

To: Bob Bailey, Deputy Minister, Environment and Natural Resources
Peter Vician, Deputy Minister, Industry, Tourism and Investment
Debbie Delancey, Deputy Minister, Municipal and Community Affairs
Gabiella Sparling, Deputy Minister, Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations

RE: GNWT Comments on the Revised Draft Dehcho Land Use Plan (November 2005)

Dear Sir and Madam,

The Dehcho Interim Measures Agreement (IMA) states that *“the Parties (Dehcho First Nations, Canada and the GNWT) will develop a land use plan (the Plan) for the Deh Cho territory for lands outside the existing boundaries of a local government and Nahanni National Park Reserve.”*

The parties negotiated land use planning provisions and draft land use planning guidelines to establish a land use planning committee with representatives from the Dehcho First Nations, Canada and the GNWT. The Committee has been working with all parties since May of 2002 to develop a land use plan. *“The purpose of the Plan is to promote the social, cultural and economic well-being of residents and communities in the Dehcho Territory, having regard to the interests of all Canadians.”*

The Committee recently hosted a Regional Land Use Planning Forum with delegates and representatives from all communities, government and our many planning partners. The GNWT submission raised critical questions regarding the Committee’s mandate which appears to result in a severe divergence from the land use planning process being implemented by the Committee over the past several years.

These mandate questions are coming late in the process and created some confusion at the Forum. This confusion was compounded as the GNWT presentation and comments regarding the Committee’s mandate were inconsistent with the written submission received from the GNWT.

Given that the GNWT comments seem to indicate a different understanding of land use planning than that held by the Committee, the Dehcho First Nations and Canada, it seems appropriate to meet with you to share, first hand, our understanding of the land use planning project, our successes and challenges. We also believe that meeting with you directly will allow us to become better informed about your concerns.

As such, the Committee requested a meeting with relevant GNWT Deputy Ministers at the Regional Forum to review the comments and discuss next steps. I followed up with Deputy Minister Bob Bailey by phone on February 17th to set up such a meeting. Ms. Jane McMullen returned the call on behalf of Mr. Bailey to say that such a meeting would not be appropriate until much later, after GNWT staff had a chance to meet internally, then work through revisions with the Committee staff first. For clarity, the Committee questions the GNWT rationale for continuing to work internally on proposed revisions to the Draft Land Use Plan where the foundation of the Plan, its mandate, are at the heart of the revisions being advanced. In short, until the mandate questions are addressed it is unclear how future revisions from the GNWT will support the Plan development process currently being implemented.

The Committee would like to formally request a meeting with the Deputy Ministers. The purpose of the meeting would be to review the Revised Draft Dehcho Plan directly with you, to discuss the GNWT submission within the context of our work to date, answer questions and discuss our next steps. We do not expect any decisions to be made at this meeting; it is a chance to share information and perspectives.

We would like to suggest a window of March 13 -15, 2006 as tentative dates for such a meeting, to be held in Yellowknife at a location convenient for you.

Mr. Ron D. Antoine, the GNWT's representative, Mr. Adrian Boyd, Canada's representative, and I will attend this meeting on behalf of the Committee. I look forward to your timely response to our request. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (867) 699-3164 or hwiebe@dehcholands.org.

Sincerely,



Heidi Wiebe, Executive Director
Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee