

May
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Mr. Anthony J. Andrews
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Prospectors and Developers
Association of Canada
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Mr. Gordon Peeling
President and Chief Executive Officer
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Mr. Mike Vaydik
General Manager
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Chamber of Mines
PO Box 2818
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Dear Messrs. Andrews, Peeling and Vaydik:

Thank you for your co-signed letter of March 17, 2006, regarding the Revised Draft Dehcho Land Use Plan and the interests of the mineral industry.

An understanding of mineral and non-renewable resource potential is certainly essential to making sound resource management decisions. The Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee has put significant resources into evaluating the mineral potential of the Dehcho territory and identifying priority areas for mineral development throughout the planning process. The Committee relied on the expertise of researchers and geologists from the C.S. Lord Northern Geoscience Centre and the Geological Survey of Canada, as well as consultant Mr. Brian Eddy of GSI-Geosystems Integration.

The Department has stated its concerns to the Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee which included the size and extent of the proposed Conservation Zones, which prohibit mineral exploration and development. It must be noted, however, that the Nahanni Conservation Zone is undergoing a Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment as part of the Nahanni Park expansion process, and that the Plan will be revised to reflect the results of this process.

Likewise, the Edehzhie Protected Areas Strategy Zone is undergoing a non-renewable resource assessment as part of the Protected Areas Strategy process, and the Plan will be revised to reflect the results of this process as well. These processes are meant to identify high mineral potential areas that may then be zoned to allow for exploration and development of mineral resources. It is also important to note that all existing third-party interests, including existing mineral claims and leases, will be exempt from the Plan.

In addition, any approved Plan would be an interim document until a Dehcho Final Agreement is reached. The Committee has stated that the size and extent of the Conservation Zones will very likely be reduced following a Final Agreement.

The Department has offered to work with the Committee beyond the March 31, 2006, time line to ensure the Plan meets the needs of all stakeholders.

The consultation plan outlined in your letter would appear to be a positive contribution to the overall understanding of mineral development for the people of the Dehcho. However, it is unfortunate that your organizations were not able to engage more extensively in the Committee's three-year plan development and consultation process.

I encourage you to contact the Committee and its senior staff directly regarding your concerns and your proposed consultation plan, to ensure they understand your concerns and are able to take them into account as they update the Revised Draft Plan.

Once again, thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by
a signé l'original*

The Honourable Jim Prentice, PC, QC, MP

c.c.: The Honourable Gary Lunn, PC, MP
The Honourable Brendan Bell, MLA
Mr. Joseph Handley
Dennis Bevington, MP
Grand Chief Herb Norwegian