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Keewatin Inuit Association

Serving the
Communities
of

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Baker Lake

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**Chesterfield
Inlet**

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Coral Harbour

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Eskimo Point

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Rankin Inlet

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Repulse Bay

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Whale Cove

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Fri, Feb 16, 1990

Hon. Dennis Patterson
Government Leader
Government of the Northwest Territories
Yellowknife NWT

Dear Mr. Patterson,

Thank you for your letter of February 15, 1990.

I am well aware that your government has failed to take a public position on the proposed Kiggavik uranium mine, and I am writing to tell you that **it is time you did.**

It's Inuit Land, not Federal Land

Before responding to your letter I must object in the strongest possible terms to your statement that

The proposed project is on federal land, is under federal legislation and is therefore subject to federal assessment and review jurisdiction... the ultimate authority over the project and indeed all mining in the NWT rests with the federal DIAND minister.

The final authority may be federal, and the assessment and review jurisdiction may be federal, but **the land is Inuit land.**

The federal government may hold the land in trust for us until the implementation of the provisions of our land claim, but it is still **our land.**

Which Side Are You On?

Attached you will find Resolution #3 - 90 from our 1990 Annual General Meeting, which is currently being held in Rankin Inlet.

As the FEARO process approaches its climax, Keewatin Inuit are growing increasingly suspicious of a conspicuous silence on the part of your government.

You may be aware that we have good reason to be wary about statements which actors in the FEARO review process choose to make- or not to make. The Executive Vice-President of Urangesellschaft Canada Ltd. used to promise us that the Kiggavik project would not go ahead without the support of the people of the region. When it became apparent that they were not going to receive our support, UG simply broke their promise and changed their position. They now claim that they didn't mean 'support' in the **political** sense of the word.

One reason why we found Mr. Stephen's letter to be so noteworthy was that it provided an explanation for a question we have been asking ourselves with increasing frequency- why are we not receiving **political** support from the Government of the Northwest Territories?

We have been unable to find a justification for your unwillingness to support- in the **political** sense of the word- what you must, by now, know to be the overwhelming sentiment of the Inuit of Baker Lake and the other Keewatin communities.

There are very, very few people in this region who have not decided to oppose the Kiggavik proposal. If your government, with all the resources at its disposal, is unable to see the simple truths that all of us can see, then I am afraid your vision has become seriously impaired.

I believe, however, that you **do** understand why we are so strongly opposed to the Kiggavik proposal. I believe you understand our opposition perfectly, and that you share it. And I believe it is a sad commentary on the state of northern politics that you choose not to act publicly on your understanding.

Perhaps you feel that public opposition to Kiggavik would make your government look "anti-development" in Ottawa? I thought about this myself.

and concluded that the best way to deal with the problem was to be clear about what I support and what I do not. I'm sure you noticed that in my press release I stated

We are in favour of non-renewable resource development in our region. We are in favour of mining development in our region. I am delighted to hear about promising gold discoveries close to Baker Lake. We need the employment that these mines would provide. But we oppose uranium mining, and we have the facts to support our reasons for doing so. The GNWT should join the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in opposing uranium mining in the Arctic.

Or perhaps your silence should flatter us? Perhaps you feel that our opposition has been so strong that a rejection of the proposal is a foregone conclusion? Perhaps, but we are not willing to take any chances.

We know there are senior employees of both the territorial and federal governments who believe that Kiggavik should be approved. We have heard influential political figures argue that the real decision will be made at the highest levels in Ottawa, not by the FEARO panel.

Your government's silence has led some people to hopelessness and frustration, to the conclusion that a "deal" has already been "cut." Some people claim they can detect the smell of a "backroom deal" on the political winds. The contents of Mr. Stephen's leaked letter has confirmed many people's worst fears.

All you have done in your reply to my press release is describe your silence:

our government is awaiting the results of the FEARO process before determining our position... The Executive Council looks forward to receiving the FEARO report and will prepare its position on the project only after a very full and careful review of the report.

Why? You did not tell me **why** you refuse to take a position until the review process is **over**.

You did not tell me **why** you were willing to take a strong position **during** the FEARO review of the proposed pulp and paper mill in northern Alberta. I remember the most recent First Ministers' Conference, when you had the

opportunity to address the Prime Minister and the Premiers. You told them that the GNWT was completely opposed to the proposed pulp and paper mill in northern Alberta. You were very clear on this. Then you mentioned that the GNWT was very worried about the possible impact of global warming on the stability of permafrost- something I am quite worried about as well. I was expecting you to tell these powerful leaders that this was one reason why your government also opposed the Kiggavik proposal- but you didn't. You said nothing.

As far as I am aware, there is no reason whatsoever why your government could not take a position **during** the Kiggavik FEARO review. You have **chosen** not to take a position. **Why?**

I can appreciate that in the early days of the process you were worried that if you took a position you might be accused of trying to impose your views on us. Those early days are gone.

In a democratic society we now have a right to try and impose **our** views on **you**, since **you** represent **us**. You have no authority other than that which comes from representing us.

We have made our views known clearly and firmly, and almost unanimously. Keewatin Inuit have taken the lead- the least you could do is follow.

Mr. Stephen's letter

With regard to Mr. Stephen's letter itself, I notice that you have reversed the order of importance of his "sources." Mr. Stephen wrote to Ottawa of

candid conversations ... with Deputy Ministers in the Territorial Government and other senior representatives of our client groups

but you wrote to me of his

candid and private discussions with a wide range of people from business, industry and various institutions including, but not limited to, Territorial government.

In addition to noting these "candid conversations" with GNWT Deputy Ministers and others, Mr. Stephen stated that "GNWT expects that...",

"GNWT strategy ... involves...", "During 1990 the GNWT will recommend...", "the territorial government will approve...", "GNWT legislation to support ... will be developed during...", etc.

I trust that government officials of his rank are not in the habit of claiming to have inside information which they do not, in fact, possess.

The implications are obvious: Mr. Stephen was telling Ottawa that he had the "inside word" from high-ranking GNWT bureaucrats on their strategies for the 1990s. You should not be surprised, then, that we take Mr. Stephen's letter at face value.

The FEARO review process

In your letter you dwell on the need for a "full and fair public review" through the FEARO process. FEARO may well be "the most comprehensive and complete review process available in the NWT at this time," and the FEARO panel and staff may have been doing a very good job so far, but that does not mean that the FEARO process is without flaws and weaknesses.

And while I appreciate the additional funding which your government helped make available to intervenors in the second phase of the review, the fact is the amount which has been made available to us is insufficient to pay for the work we feel must be carried out. I would point out that we have called for a delay in the public hearings on the EIS due to gross deficiencies in the documents, and we did this knowing that this would spread our resources even thinner than they currently are.

Finally, I find it rather patronizing for **you** to encourage **us** to "participate fully" in the FEARO review. Keewatin Inuit have participated vigorously in the FEARO process to date, and we have no intention of stopping until the Kiggavik proposal itself is stopped.

As a member of NAUC I can tell you that our goals are to:

- encourage individual Keewatin Inuit to speak their minds at the public hearings on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS);
- provide information and analysis requested by individuals and organizations in the region to support their participation in the FEARO review;


- arrange for expert analysis of the EIS to support our collective submission to the FEARO panel; and
- network effectively with other intervenors in order to make the most efficient use of our limited resources.

Our AGM continues until Saturday afternoon. You would be most welcome to catch this afternoon's flight to Rankin and discuss this with us in person. If you are unable or unwilling to do so, I would appreciate receiving a reply at your earliest possible convenience.

In conclusion, you are by now probably aware that the Baker Lake Hamlet Council has abandoned its previous policy of neutrality with regard to the Kiggavik proposal, and will hold a public plebiscite as soon as legally and administratively possible.

I urge you to abandon your government's policy of neutrality as well. If you require more "proof" of our region's opposition to the Kiggavik proposal, I am prepared to hold a plebiscite in all seven Keewatin communities.

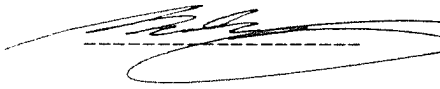
Yours sincerely,



Louis Pilakapsi
President

cc: KIA delegates
Inuit organizations
members of the Legislative Assembly
Jack Anawak MP
federal minister of DIAND
federal minister of Environment
northern media

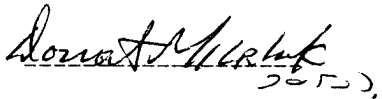
NOTE: This letter has been approved by all delegates to the 1990 KIA AGM.



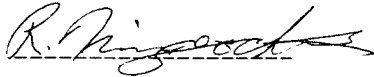
Tagak Curley, President, Keewatin Wildlife Federation
and Spokesperson, Northern Anti-Uranium Coalition



Peter Kriqalilik, Speaker, Keewatin Regional Council




Donat Milortuk, President, Tungavik Federation of Nunavut



Raymond Ningecheak, Vice-President, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada



Michael Amarook, Deputy Mayor, Hamlet of Baker Lake



Fred Ford (for Joan Scottie), Baker Lake Concerned Citizens'
Committee