

City of Yellowknife



7 November 1995

File: 613-G1

SENT BY FACSIMILE

Mr. John Stark
Manager
Royal Oak Giant Mine
Yellowknife, NT

Dear Mr. Stark

As I stated in our telephone conversation yesterday, Ms. Laura Johnston, Chief, Environmental Protection, has been invited to speak at the Council Meeting on Tuesday, November 14th beginning at 7:00 p.m. The purpose of Ms. Johnston's attendance is to advise City Council of the accuracy of the statistics cited in Alderman MacQuarrie's statement regarding emissions from Royal Oak, Giant Mine.

For your information, attached is a copy of Alderman MacQuarrie's statement, and the motion which was adopted by City Council.

Yours truly

Ms. Coral Callioux
City Clerk

attachments

/CC

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STATEMENTS

10. Alderman MacQuarrie made a statement regarding the emissions from Royal Oak Giant Mine stacks. Alderman MacQuarrie noted that Air pollution from the Giant mine is a well known local environmental and human health concern for the people of Yellowknife. Every day 20-30 kg. of arsenic is released into Yellowknife's environment by Royal Oak Mines, the owner of the Giant mine. No levels of arsenic in the air we breath, have been proven safe. Sulphur dioxide emissions amount to 50-65 tonnes per day. By comparison, the Jackfish Lake Power Plant emits about 30 tonnes of sulphur dioxide a year. Alderman MacQuarrie noted that Giant mine is the major source of these pollutants as all other sources contribute only a minuscule amount to the levels detected in downtown Yellowknife. This cannot continue, but stopping it requires action by both government and industry. This includes the City of Yellowknife. It is incumbent on this Council to take a position on this issue and to take whatever action is necessary to bring an end to this pollution. In 1991 two residents of Yellowknife asked for an investigation into the environmental and human health implications of the emissions from the Giant mine. The resulting report issued in June 1993 did little more than measure the emissions from the Giant stack and concluded that trees up to 5 km away are being damaged. There were no federal or territorial air quality regulations up to this point. GNWT remedied this, in part, by adopting air quality "guidelines" for sulphur dioxide and dust in June 1994. These "guidelines" are neither legally binding nor enforceable. Alderman MacQuarrie noted that last month the GNWT released a computer modelling study to explain the levels of arsenic and sulphur dioxide recorded at a downtown monitoring station and to provide a planning tool to assess pollution reduction measures. The report shows that the sulphur dioxide emissions from the Giant mine would have to be reduced 90-95% to meet the current "guidelines". Dilution or dispersion will not work if the guidelines are to be taken seriously. The Canadian Arctic Resources Committee and others have suggested that a clear principle--zero discharge--must form the basis of action by

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✓ government and industry to protect the health and environment of Yellowknife and its residents. Dilution or dispersion has been rejected as an industrial pollution control option in most places in southern Canada. Scrubbers to remove sulphur dioxide or an autoclave to completely eliminate air emissions, must be considered by Royal Oak. Other mines in Canada have already installed this technology. Royal Oak must not have a free ride by unloading its environmental costs on the citizens of Yellowknife. For its part, GNWT should take the initiative to adopt legally-binding emission standards. Alderman MacQuarrie noted that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development recently recommended that federal authorities finalize a strategy on arsenic emissions before December of this year. The City should formally endorse and adopt the principle of zero discharge as a goal to end air pollution from industrial sources where known technology can easily be applied, such as the Giant mine. Alderman MacQuarrie noted that she will be presenting a motion later this evening on this issue for the consideration of Council.

11. Alderman Kasteel stated that he was elected to bring a new look to City Council and took offense to the Editorial in the August 25th issue of the Yellowknifer.

CORRESPONDENCE

12. Council read a letter from Mr. Jeffrey Esser, Executive Director, Government Finance Officers Association, regarding the award of the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award to the City of Yellowknife in recognition of excellence in governmental budgeting. Mayor Lovell presented this Award to Mr. Robert Charpentier, Manager of Financial Services Division for the City.

COMMITTEE REPORTSCommunity Services Committee

13. Alderman Peplow read a report of a meeting held on Monday, August 21, 1995 at 3:00 p.m. in the City Hall Boardroom. The attendance was noted.

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58. Alderman MacQuarrie moved,
Alderman Peplow seconded,

WHEREAS there are substantial air emissions of sulphur dioxide and arsenic from the Royal Oak Giant Mine that have been detected over Yellowknife; and

WHEREAS these emissions have been proven to be harmful to vegetation in the vicinity of the mine and have the potential to cause harmful effects to the environment and human health of the residents of Yellowknife; and

WHEREAS the principle of zero discharge of harmful pollutants is becoming widely accepted; and

WHEREAS there are no enforceable government regulations on sulphur dioxide or arsenic emissions into the air; and

WHEREAS there are technologically feasible methods to reduce and eliminate the air emissions from the Giant Mine; and

WHEREAS little progress has been made on discussions between the company and governments to eliminate these emissions; and

WHEREAS the City of Yellowknife has a duty to take a position on matters of public interest to its citizens.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Yellowknife urge the company, federal and territorial governments to conclude discussions on the elimination of the Giant Mine emissions within one year; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Yellowknife request that the federal and territorial governments take immediate steps to introduce enforceable, binding regulations dealing with sulphur dioxide and arsenic levels in the air that Yellowknifers' breath; and

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FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that a copy of this motion be conveyed immediately by letter to Royal Oak Mines and the responsible territorial and federal Ministers.

It was noted that the Jackfish Lake Power Plant also has emissions which are not included in this motion and consideration should be given to the Cominco Mine operation. Alderman MacQuarrie noted that this information was obtained from a meeting the City attended where these emissions were discussed in detail. The City does not have control over setting standards for air control in Yellowknife, but this motion sends the message that the City does not accept the sulphur dioxide levels in the air.

MOTION CARRIED**(Aldermen Dalton and Kasteel opposed)**

59. Council read a memorandum regarding a request to endorse the Yellowknife Direct Charge Co-op's intervention on the purchase of MacKenzie Media by Northwestel. The Mayor received a letter dated August 25, 1995, from the President of the Yellowknife Direct Charge Co-op requesting Council's endorsement of their intervention on the purchase of MacKenzie Media by Northwestel. Interventions must be filed by August 29th and therefore, the request was for Council to consider this matter at the August 28th Council meeting. Since an important part of any intervention is community support, the Co-op is requesting endorsement from the City. The Yellowknife Direct Charge Co-op have listed the following main concerns with respect to the sale of MacKenzie Media to Northwestel:

- the ownership by Northwestel of both telephone and television systems would constitute a double monopoly which would not be in the best interests of consumers; and
- the takeover proposal has not provided sufficient tangible benefits to Yellowknife consumers.