

Environmental Health Assessment Services
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February 1, 2002

Ms Michèle Moisan
Environmental Advisor
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Complexe Jacques Cartier
320 St-Josheph E., Bureau 400
Québec, QC
G1K 9J2

Subject: Niocan Inc. Mining Proposal, Oka Quebec

Dear Ms Moisan:

This is in response to your e-mails of January 10, 2002 and January 22, 2002, wherein you requested advice relating to potential radiation issues associated with the mining operations near Oka, Quebec, being proposed by Niocan Inc.

Staff at Health Canada's Radiation Protection Bureau and Environmental Health Assessment Services conducted the review of the following documents: "Projet minier Niocan - Étude environnementale", prepared by Roche, October 2000; "Projet minier Niocan - Étude environnementale - Rapport complémentaire 1", prepared by Roche, April 2001; "Niocan Mining Project in Oka" prepared by Mr. Gordon Edwards, November 2001; and "Projet de mine de Niocan Inc. à Oka, Contre-expertise, November 2001.

We understand, based on the review of the above documents, that the proponent will be working with fresh ore. Some of the tailings generated by the proposed Niocan operations will be disposed of at the former St. Lawrence Columbium site while the remainder of the tailings will be placed in the Niocan mine. The liquid fraction of these tailings is to be recycled back into the ore processing operation at the Niocan site. We also understand that the naturally-occurring radon levels are generally high in this area.

Although the ore analyses for radiological characteristics are not adequate, it appears from the limited information contained in the Roche report, that there is enough incidental radioactivity in the ore for us to be concerned with its potential impacts on human health.

The nearest Mohawk residents are located at approximately 2.5 km away from the proposed mine site. It appears from the Roche report that the tailings will be managed appropriately at the old St. Lawrence Columbian site. If our contention is correct, then these new tailings are not likely to pose any additional radon hazards to those Mohawks residents.

We understand that various provincial ministries, including the Ministère de l'Environnement and the Ministère des Ressources naturelles, will be issuing authorizations for the construction, operation and decommissioning of the mine and the mine site. We also note that the Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux des Laurentides is aware of the high radon levels in this area.

We trust that this information will be useful. If you have any questions you can reach Dr. Anar Baweja at (613) 941-2355 or myself at (613) 941-8916

Sincerely,

Claude David
Senior Advisor, Contaminated Sites - EA Coordinator, Nuclear Projects

cc. B. Tracy, Health Canada
A. Baweja, Health Canada