

TRANSLATION

**A BAPE inquiry into the potential effects of operating a niobium mine and plant in
Oka on surface and ground waters and their uses**

Québec City, December 8, 2004 – Last November 26, the Minister of the Environment, Thomas J. Mulcair, mandated the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) to hold an inquiry into the *potential effects of operating a niobium mine and plant in Oka on surface and ground waters and their uses*.

The BAPE Commission of Inquiry will examine the potential effects :

- of ground water pumping on surface water level and on the quantity and quality of ground water ;
- of possible ground water level fluctuations due to pumping on the various uses of this water, and notably on agricultural use ;
- of stacking tailings in ditches and tailing sites on surface and ground water quality ;
- of stacking tailings and slag in drifts on ground water quality ;
- of mine drainage mine water on Rousse river water quality and the use thereof for irrigation purposes.

BAPE President André Harvey has entrusted Joseph Zayed with the inquiry. In 2002, Mr. Zayed chaired the BAPE Commission of Inquiry into possible environmental and public health effects of radioactivity from operation of a niobium mine and plant by Niocan inc. The BAPE report must be submitted to the Minister of the Environment no later than March 31, 2005. Details as to the inquiry will be issued in a press release as soon as they have been decided upon.

Documentation available

The BAPE will make any documents pertaining to this mandate available to the public as soon as possible at BAPE documentation centres in Québec City, the Bibliothèque centrale of the Université du Québec à Montréal, and at regional consultation centres open for this purpose. The documents can be accessed at any time at the BAPE website at www.bape.gouv.qc.ca.

For more information, interested parties are asked to contact Communications Adviser Louise Bourdages at (418) 643-7447 extension 532, or, toll-free at 1-800-463-4732. You can also reach the Commission by e-mail at oka-eaux@bape.gouv.qc.ca.