



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

JUN 14 2016

The Honorable
Dan Sullivan
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sullivan:

Thank you for your letter of May 12 regarding mining activity in Canada and its potential impact in Alaska.

We actively engage with Canada on protecting our shared waters, an issue we recognize is of significant concern in Alaska. We have discussed potential impacts of mining in British Columbia repeatedly with our Canadian counterparts in our semiannual dialogues on transboundary water issues. Following the 2014 Mount Polley dam failure, we asked Canada to ensure the lessons from that breach influence improvements to both federal and provincial environmental assessment processes and oversight of existing and proposed mines. Most recently, on April 21, the Department of State and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) raised the concerns of potential mining impacts with our Canadian counterparts from Global Affairs Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The Department of State intends to continue to work, in coordination with the EPA, to exchange information with Canada regarding what the Canadian federal government is doing to meet U.S. concerns about protecting this sensitive shared ecosystem from potential transboundary pollution during mine development, operation, impoundment design, and post closure, and through bonding practices. The EPA has been actively involved in discussions with Canadian federal and provincial governments to enhance U.S. engagement to address transboundary concerns associated with proposed projects. Further, we maintain ongoing contact with provincial authorities regarding ongoing investigations of Mount Polley. We also intend to engage with the provincial Ministry of Energy and Mines regarding the Auditor General's report. At the same time, Canada is undertaking an assessment of its federal environmental assessment law and processes. We do not intend to refer this to the International Joint Commission at this time.

We understand that productive discussions have taken place at the state-provincial level: a Statement of Cooperation is under development to build on the Memorandum of Understanding on transboundary environmental issues signed last fall by Alaska Governor Bill Walker and British Columbia Premier Christy Clark. We understand the Statement of Cooperation is intended to enhance stakeholder engagement and coordinate collaborative transboundary watershed management.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage with you further to explore the potential of supporting water quality testing in order to establish baseline water quality data, and to explore a consultation process with U.S. entities on participation during mine permit reviews.

We hope this information is useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance on this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julia Frifield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julia Frifield
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs