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May 23, 2008

Mr. Randall Barrett, President
Ms. Judy Smith, Vice-President
Cumulative Environmental Management Association
Suite 214, 9914 Morrison Street
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 4A4

Dear Mr. Barrett and Ms. Smith:

Thank you for your May 8, 2008 letter regarding the Cumulative Environmental Management Association's (CEMA) non-consensus recommendation for conservation options in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Thank you also for clarifying the reasoning behind the timing of CEMA's recommendation. I am pleased to provide the following response on behalf of my counterparts at Alberta Environment and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

CEMA's non-consensus recommendation is under careful review by staff at Energy, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. The fact that this is a non-consensus recommendation demonstrates the range and complexity of issues in the northeast Alberta. The potential implications also mean that this requires further study, consideration and clarification.

There have been numerous leases for mineral rights sold in these areas prior to CEMA's original request. The Government of Alberta currently has a number of policy initiatives underway that will address some of the issues CEMA has raised. These initiatives include the provincial energy strategy, the Land-use Framework and the Strategic Plan for Oil Sands Sustainable Development.

The government is not considering suspending the leasing of mineral rights before the finalization of these initiatives and any policy decisions arising from them. We would appreciate having the opportunity to review CEMA's entire Terrestrial Ecosystems Management Framework, prior to making policy decisions in this regard.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the Government of Alberta's position on this matter. I would be pleased to meet with CEMA's Management Committee and discuss this further as required.

Sincerely,

C. Peter Watson, P. Eng.
Deputy Minister

copy: Jim Ellis, Deputy Minister, Alberta Environment
Eric McGhan, Deputy Minister, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development