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## **NAHANNI EXPANSION GOOD FOR DEH CHO & NWT, SAYS MP**

**OTTAWA** - Recent criticisms of the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve are unfounded says the Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic.

“Suggestions the public consultation process is flawed are simply attempts to prevent the protection of this valuable landscape and the wildlife which call it home,” said Dennis Bevington MP (Western Arctic). “The most recent process for expansion of the park began in 1999 with the beginning of the Deh Cho Process negotiations where Deh Cho representatives proposed expanding the park.”

Parks Canada has provided detailed briefings at the consultation sessions about the park expansion. Participants in the sessions the received information on the mineral potential of the proposed expansion area.

“I think you have to look at who has been attacking the process and you will see they have long been opposed to expanding the park and blind to the enormous economic potential that will be created,” said Bevington. “One has to wonder what their real motivation is and who they really represent, when it is the people and the leadership of the Dehcho who have been at the forefront of this effort. The benefits from the expansion of the park will create significant economic opportunities for the people of the Deh Cho and the NWT.”

A study by the Town of Banff found Banff National Park generates \$1.24 billion dollars in economic development and provides more than \$500 million to all levels of government each year. Thousands of people visit Wood Buffalo National Park each year with most passing through Fort Smith.

“Wood Buffalo National Park draws people from all over the world, who spend at least part of their time shopping in Fort Smith,” said Bevington. “ In my experience, from living next to the largest national park in Canada, is that the key is to ensure the co management agreements struck for the expanded park will deliver long term economic benefits, including business opportunities within its boundaries for the people of the Deh Cho.”

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