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August 8, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kerry:

I am writing to reiterate my concerns about large-scale mining in British Columbia, which has the potential to adversely affect downstream fisheries and communities in Southeast Alaska.

The tailings pond breach at the Mount Polley Mine on August 4th has renewed the specter of environmental impacts from large-scale hardrock mineral developments in Canada that are located near transboundary rivers. While it is encouraging that Canadian officials are publicly stating that preliminary test results show contaminant levels remain below both drinking water and aquatic life guidelines, this incident should compel the State Department to evaluate additional steps that may be warranted to safeguard U.S. interests.

One such step would be to encourage Canada's federal government to undertake a Panel Review of the Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell (KSM) mine in British Columbia. While the project has already undergone extensive assessment, a rigorous final review would help ensure that its potential impacts on transboundary waters – and Alaska – are fully minimized. A Panel Review would help guard against a similar breach of wastewater and tailings, which in the case of the KSM mine could be released into the Unuk River, just 19 miles north of the Alaskan border.

Thousands of Alaska Natives, commercial fishermen, and tourism industry stakeholders have legitimate concerns about the potential impacts that large-scale mining in Canada could hold for them. I therefore urge you to accelerate your work with your Canadian counterparts to confirm that new mining activities are subject to proper review and continued oversight.

I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator