

November 15, 2007

The Honourable Maxime Bernier  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Lester B Pearson Building, Tower "A", 10th Floor  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0G2

and

The Honourable Beverley J. Oda  
Minister of International Cooperation  
Canadian International Development Agency  
200 Promenade du Portage  
Gatineau, Québec  
K1A 0G4

Dear Ministers Bernier and Oda,

I am writing to express our concerns about the Canadian-financed Three Gorges dam and to ask the Canadian government to provide assistance to the project's victims, particularly those trying to assert their rights to fair compensation for damages.

As you may know, previous federal governments promoted and helped finance the \$25 billion dam, which has displaced more than one million people, and has triggered an environmental crisis affecting millions more living along its reservoir – exactly as critics, including Probe International, have warned since the 1980s.

Stunning admissions about the dam's environmental problems came at a meeting of senior project officials and communist party leaders in September:

- Its 600-kilometre long reservoir has triggered life-threatening landslides and tsunami-like waves up to 50 metres high. The reservoir banks have collapsed in more than 90 places and 70,000 people have had to be evacuated.
- Rapid sediment buildup in Chongqing harbour, at the upper end of the Three Gorges reservoir, will render the port useless within 20 years or sooner. (The authorities have already started work on a new port downstream but that too could become choked with sediment.)
- Water released from the dam is scouring flood control embankments at an alarming rate, putting downstream Wuhan, a city of 9 million people, at great risk.

"If no preventative measures are taken, the project could lead to environmental catastrophe," the official Xinhua news agency reported.

We believe the Canadian government must share responsibility for this grave situation. The Three Gorges dam would likely not be operating today if not for the Canadian International Development Agency's 1986 decision to finance the feasibility study by a Canadian engineering consortium that recommended China build the dam.

The engineering consortium, known as CIPM Yangtze Joint Venture was made up of Acres International, SNC, Lavalin, Hydro-Quebec and British Columbia Hydro. Then Minister for External Relations and International Development, Monique Landry, anticipated that the feasibility study would strengthen the opportunity for Canadian companies to participate in the project. China, meanwhile, needed the Canadian feasibility study to help raise international financing for the controversial project.

CYJV's conclusion that the project was entirely feasible – one which discounted the data warning of disaster – was disturbing. The consortium even concluded, without substantiation, that no other investment options could provide the people of China with the navigation, flood control, and power benefits Three Gorges could.

The facts are:

- The dam has increased flood risk, affecting millions of people downstream and upstream, exactly as many reputable experts in China and North America had warned.
- The dam has created a navigation nightmare. It is an enormous bottleneck for ships trying to reach Chongqing, with delays of up to several days before they can pass through the locks. More goods are now transported around the dam by road because it's faster and cheaper.
- The dam's power is costly and unreliable due to the vagaries of river flow and conflicting flood storage objectives. China would have been better off building smaller-scale power plants closer to where power is needed.
- Hundreds of thousands of farmers moved uphill from the reservoir cannot grow crops on the steep and barren hillsides, and have no alternative means of income.

Had CYJV not reassured the Chinese government that the dam was entirely feasible, had it instead warned the Chinese government of the project's very real risks, millions of people living along the Yangtze might not be enduring multiple threats of catastrophe from this project today.

As the ministers responsible for Canadian aid and foreign affairs, we recommend that you establish a legal aid fund for the victims of this Canadian aid disaster. Many people originally displaced by the dam saw their properties expropriated with little or no compensation. Some were even jailed and beaten for exposing corrupt officials who had cheated them out of compensation or replacement land. Now the Chinese government wants to move another 2.3 million rural residents at risk of landslides and increased flood damage along the reservoir, some for the second time.

Many Canadian companies, including those in the consortium, Canadian General Electric, and AGRA Monenco, benefited from the government's support for their work on this dam. Now is the time for the

Canadian government to recognize the project's victims.

Before Three Gorges is completed next year, the Canadian government should make amends for failing to warn the Chinese government that the project's environmental risks would ultimately threaten the lives, property, and economic future of millions of people living along the Yangtze river. By establishing a legal aid fund for Three Gorges victims, Canada would be helping to make their lives whole again.

I look forward to your earliest response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Adams', followed by a period.

Patricia Adams  
Executive Director  
Probe International