

Ministre des Affaires du Nord, ministre responsable de
Développement économique Canada pour les Prairies et
ministre responsable de l'Agence canadienne de
développement économique du Nord



Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister Responsible for
Prairies Economic Development Canada and
Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern
Economic Development Agency

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H4

November 19, 2021

Mr. David Livingstone
Chair
Giant Mine Oversight Board
5014 50th Avenue
P.O. Box 1602
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 2P2

Dear Mr. Livingstone:

Thank you for your correspondence of June 4, 2021, concerning the Giant Mine Oversight Board 2020 Annual Report and recommendations. Please accept my apology for the delay in this response.

The Board's annual report is very important to the overall management of the Giant Mine Remediation Project. I share the Board's view that additional important work must be undertaken to ensure the effective remediation of the Giant Mine site in a manner that will ensure project efficiency and benefit local residents. We must continue with the necessary care and maintenance, fulfilling regulatory obligations, supporting the early works, and risk mitigation activities of the project.

Canada shares the opinion that the remediation of Giant Mine is an opportunity for significant social and economic benefits for the region. We welcome your recommendations and support as the project team continues to work with rights holders, Indigenous groups, and other stakeholders to maximize Indigenous and northern employment and business opportunities. Maximizing these benefits is a key consideration to the project's communications, engagement, and socio-economic strategy and implementation plan. Please find the project team's responses to your recommendations included in Annex 1.

I look forward to receiving updates on this important project. I have asked Mr. Serge Beaudoin, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Northern Affairs Organization, to keep me informed of future discussions that he and his team have with you and the Giant Mine Oversight Board on the advancement of the Giant Mine Remediation Project.

I encourage you to reach out regularly to Mr. Beaudoin and the project team to offer your insight and perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Vandal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "Vandal".

Hon. Daniel Vandal, P.C., M.P.

c.c.: The Honourable Caroline Cochrane, M.L.A.

Mr. Michael McLeod, M.P.

Encl.

Giant Mine Remediation Project Response to Giant Mine Oversight Board 2020 Annual Report Recommendations

<u>Subject</u>	<u>GMOB Comments</u> ¹	<u>GMOB Recommendations</u> ²	<u>Giant Mine Remediation Project Response</u>
1. Environment	<p>The Giant Mine Oversight Board (GMOB) notes that ongoing monitoring and inspections in 2020 identified no significant environmental issues.</p> <p>The Project Team’s timely and comprehensive response to the water licensing process is a positive sign for upcoming remediation activities. Similarly, the range of management and monitoring plans approved and under-development also indicates the Project Team’s efforts to avoid negative environmental impacts and make the site safer both in the short and longer terms.</p> <p>Concerns raised about the stability of Dam #1 and approaches to mitigation indicate that engagement, inspection, and monitoring systems are working effectively. The Project Team worked collaboratively with consultants and contractors to rapidly design and construct a freeze system to reduce the potential for environmental impacts.</p> <p>Despite the Project Team’s auditing and reporting commitments, GMOB did not see any substantive action on its 2019 recommendation to take every opportunity to</p>	<p>Directed to: GMRP Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends that the Project Team develop a short and long-term strategy that sets targets and commits to action to proactively reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To this end, the Project Team is encouraged to aspire to be a climate leader, role model, and advocate for federal climate action policies as set out by the Centre for Greening Government in the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.</p> <p>GMOB will continue to offer suggestions to the Project Team for ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, GMOB suggests investigating the potential of ‘green’ diesel in remediation activities.</p>	<p>In support of Canada’s sustainability goals, the Government of Canada has committed to transitioning to net-zero carbon and climate-resilient operations, as outlined in the Greening Government Strategy: A Government of Canada Directive – Canada.ca.</p> <p>The Giant Mine Remediation Project is taking several steps to proactively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement federal climate action policies. For example, we are undertaking a greenhouse gas assessment of the new water treatment plant. This will include a life cycle analysis of the heating system and all supporting equipment, as well as looking at the current proposed fuel oil heating design and an electric heating system using boilers. Greenhouse gas emissions will be calculated for each option over the 40-year lifespan of the facility to demonstrate the reduction in emissions. Results of this assessment will be incorporated into the final design.</p> <p>The Giant Mine Remediation Project is also fully committed to looking for opportunities to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions during implementation. The principal source of greenhouse gas emissions from the implementation will be through the operation of heavy construction equipment. Given that heavy construction equipment must be used for a remediation project of this nature, the principal approach to minimize greenhouse gas emissions will be to limit fuel use and reduce haul distances, wherever possible. These considerations will be addressed by the main construction manager during the development of the Project Implementation Plan.</p> <p>The main construction manager is also currently tracking and reporting</p>

¹ This text is taken directly from the Giant Mine Oversight Body 2020 Annual Report

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	<p>reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Beyond reporting commitments, the Project Team largely ignored the recommendation.</p>		<p>monthly on the project’s greenhouse gas emissions. As previously noted, it is difficult to establish a project baseline while the project is in care and maintenance, as the level of activity will significantly increase on site once implementation begins in July 2021. Further, year-to-year comparisons will not be useful, since the level and nature of remediation activities will change, depending on the type of work being carried out each year. For these reasons, the Giant Mine Remediation Project does not believe annual targets are feasible or useful, however, the Project will report project emissions, and efforts to reduce them wherever possible, to Giant Mine Oversight Board annually.</p> <p>The Giant Mine Remediation Project will continue to be open to working with Giant Mine Oversight Board in this area and welcomes any suggestions on how to further reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. The project also notes that the Northern Abandoned Mines Reclamation Program is developing guidance on Climate Change Considerations. This program wide strategy will provide further opportunities to apply best practices at the Giant Mine site.</p>
<p>2. Socioeconomic (2020-2)</p>	<p>The Project Team’s <i>Socio-Economic Strategy, 2016-2021</i> and <i>Socio-Economic Action Plan for 2018-2021</i> provide a way forward to maximize socio-economic benefits and minimize negative social impacts to northerners. The Project Team’s work on these plans and its support of the Socio-Economic Working Group are positive steps. GMOB commends the Socio-Economic Working Group for undertaking an internal survey to gauge its effectiveness.</p> <p>GMOB finds that conclusive statements about the outcomes of the Project Team’s socio-economic plans are not possible at this time.</p>	<p>Directed to: GMRP Project Team</p> <p>The Project Team uses the findings of GMOB’s independent review to improve outcomes and reporting on its <i>Socio-Economic Strategy, 2016-2021</i>, as well as strategy renewals and updates.</p>	<p>The Project team received Giant Mine Oversight Board’s independent review of the Socio-Economic Strategy on June 10, 2021, and subsequently met with the Giant Mine Oversight Board on June 28, 2021, to discuss the independent review report and recommendations going forward.</p> <p>The project team will be updating its Socio-Economic Strategy 2016–2021 in Q2 of 2021–2022. This update will reflect recent changes made to the project’s evergreen Socio-Economic Implementation Plan, which reflects input gathered from rights holders and stakeholders during focus group engagement activities undertaken in Q3 and Q4 of 2020–2021, as well as lessons learned after one-year of applying the Implementation Plan. Two other primary sources will be used to update the strategy: the Northern Contaminated Site Program’s Socio-Economic Strategy as well as the</p>

<p>3. Socio-economic (2020-3)</p>	<p>The reasons for this are inadequate data analyses and reporting in a manner that shows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How and whether targets are being met, exceeded, or maximized, and 2. The nature of mitigations considered and/or implemented to maximize business and employment opportunities. <p>In addition to these limitations, it is unclear who is accountable for meeting targets and leading needed mitigations. The timeframe and methods for reporting on targets and mitigations are also unclear.</p>	<p>Directed to: GMRP Project Team</p> <p>The Socio-Economic Working Group brings forth socio-economic considerations identified in the Perpetual Care Plan framework into the goals of the Perpetual Care Plan. This will require the Working Group to initiate and encourage the full participation of all the Parties to the Environmental Agreement in discussions about the Plan.</p>	<p>Giant Mine Oversight Board's independent review report.</p> <p>In November 2020, the Giant Mine Remediation Project submitted the preliminary Perpetual Care Plan framework to the Giant Mine Oversight Board. The next steps in 2021–2022 are for the Perpetual Care Plan Advisory Task Force to develop a statement of work for the Giant Mine Remediation Project team to onboard a consultant to commence the drafting of the first version of the Perpetual Care Plan, with input from stakeholders. The Perpetual Care Plan will be based on the 2020 Perpetual Care Plan framework and assumptions that were submitted to the Giant Mine Oversight Board, including socio-economic considerations for the perpetual care phase of the Giant Mine Remediation Project.</p>
<p>4. Socio-economic (2020-4)</p>	<p>GMOB is concerned about the lack of vision and plans to leverage the potential of the Project to contribute to longer-term economic activity in the NWT. Specifically, GMOB questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How northerners can/will benefit from the care and maintenance of the site once remediation is completed, and 2. How expertise developed through remediation of the Giant Mine can be used as a springboard for evolving a northern remediation industry. <p>In both cases, forward-looking plans are the responsibility of the Government of the NWT and the Government of Canada.</p> <p>GMOB appreciates the input of the organizations participating in the virtual social impact management workshop. The workshop</p>	<p>Directed to: GMRP Project Team</p> <p>One of the goals of the Perpetual Care Plan be to ensure that northerners have central roles in the care, maintenance, and management of the Giant Mine site into the future.</p>	<p>In November 2020, the Giant Mine Remediation Project submitted the preliminary Perpetual Care Plan framework to the Giant Mine Oversight Board. The next steps in 2021–2022 are for the Perpetual Care Plan Advisory Task Force to develop a statement of work for the Giant Mine Remediation Project team to onboard a consultant to commence the drafting of the first version of the Perpetual Care Plan, with input from stakeholders. The Perpetual Care Plan will be based on the 2020 Perpetual Care Plan framework and assumptions that were submitted to the Giant Mine Oversight Board, including socio-economic considerations for the perpetual care phase of the Giant Mine Remediation Project.</p>

	<p>detailed social impacts in health, housing and infrastructure, crime and violence, culture, money management and other infrastructure and services. Addressing these potential impacts will inform mitigations.</p> <p>GMOB supports training initiatives that are run locally and informed by community and Indigenous perspectives. Dechita Nàowo's training efforts are an example. GMOB believes that local knowledge and perspectives incorporated into training initiatives enhance their effectiveness.</p>		
<p>5. Engagement (2020-5)</p>	<p>GMOB supports the Project Team's work to find ways to maintain quality engagement processes despite the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>GMOB finds that the Project Team's retention of a dedicated engagement manager has improved the quality, meaningfulness, and accessibility of public engagement and communication activities. It is noteworthy that the Project Team has shown responsiveness to concerns raised in engagement sessions. Further, the Project Team now routinely addresses issues related to effective participation in engagement processes. These issues include the need for pre-meetings, plain language materials, and consideration of the capacity and funding needs of the Parties to the Environmental Agreement. An example of improvements in engagement activities is the</p>	<p>Directed to: GMRP Project Team</p> <p>To improve oversight of public engagement and communications, GMOB recommends that the Project Team identify indicators to enable the effectiveness of these activities to be measured.</p>	<p>The Giant Mine Remediation Project is in the process of implementing an engagement review process. This process will be utilized at a future Working Group meeting. In the interim, the project team has started gathering input, including comments and concerns, from meeting participants via surveys (e.g. the Socio Economic Working Group, the Aquatic Advisory Committee). The results of these surveys will be reported in the Giant Mine Oversight Board Annual Report.</p> <p>In order to inform the public of the upcoming remediation phase, an advertising plan was created. Advertising for the remediation was completed in early summer via social media (Facebook and twitter), newspaper and radio (French and English). The Giant Mine Remediation Project website will also be updated regularly with information on the remediation activity. It will provide a forum for interested members of the public to get access to information regarding the remediation, management plans and other topics of interest related to the project.</p> <p>The project has identified Twitter as an effective way to engage with members of the Yellowknife community and has started to increase usage of this social media tool. Through this avenue, along with the website, and utilizing the project's distribution list, information will be</p>

	<p>Project Team’s pre-engagement of the Parties in reviewing management and monitoring plans prior to submission to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board.</p> <p>While GMOB finds that public engagement and communications have improved, the Project Team has not provided any indicators to assess the effectiveness of these activities. This impacts GMOB’s ability to oversee or report on the effectiveness of engagement activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent of public awareness of the Project or opportunities to voice thoughts and concerns; • Knowledge of the current reclamation plans and future site management plans; and • Enabling residents to express their interests regarding options for future land uses near the Giant Mine site. 		<p>provided on a regular basis.</p>
<p>6. Engagement (2020-6)</p>		<p>Directed to: The City of Yellowknife</p> <p>GMOB welcomes the City of Yellowknife’s Giant Mine webpage. Ongoing updates and improvements will be needed to keep pace with upcoming remediation activities. GMOB recommends that the City make the webpage interactive to enable Yellowknife residents to provide their input on the Project. This will enhance the information that the City brings forth to Project-</p>	<p>N/A</p>

		related processes.	
7. Community Health and Wellness (2020-7)	<p>GMOB finds that the various studies, agreements, engagement, and communications activities are creating more awareness and local involvement in the Project. Still, GMOB remains concerned about the extent of public understanding of the Project. GMOB is also concerned about the success of the Project Team’s efforts to balance public opinion and technical information in its decision-making processes. Two examples of these concerns are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local residents continue to fear exposure to arsenic in tailings dust from the Project site. This fear seems to exist even though arsenic in the tailings is from arsenopyrite and calcine minerals, not arsenic trioxide. Concerns about tailings dust were evident in October 2020 when strong winds caused dust from the site to move across Back Bay toward the mouth of the Yellowknife River. 2. The Project Team does not intend to remediate the vast majority of contaminated undisturbed soils, meaning that high arsenic levels will remain in the soil both on and offsite. Local residents do not seem to fully understand that the Project Team intends to use fencing combined with public information campaigns to control access and manage associated risks of contaminated soils. 	<p>GMOB recommends that the Project Team continue to improve engagement and communications activities to ensure that local people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are not experiencing unnecessary stress or fear due to dust coming off the Giant Mine site, and b. Understand the three main types of site remediation standards - residential, industrial, untouched – and how they apply to the site. 	<p>The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board also indicated that a broader public dust communications plan was required after submission of the Dust Monitoring and Management Plan. In response to that directive, the Giant Mine Remediation Project is committing to develop a Dust Communications Plan. This plan will be developed in draft and shared with rights holders and stakeholders in fall/winter 2021–2022 through the Giant Mine Remediation Project Working Group which is comprised of representatives from the City of Yellowknife, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, North Slave Metis Alliance, Alternatives North, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Health Canada, and Giant Mine Oversight Board.</p> <p>In the interim, the Giant Mine Remediation Project has provided information on our website that details the actions taken to monitor and mitigate dust on site. In addition, newsletters will continue to include details of monitoring and mitigating dust along with communicating the low levels of arsenic trioxide in the tailings.</p> <p>In terms of the remediation standards, a significant amount of engagement was done during the surface design engagement in 2015 through 2017. However, the project will also include details of the site remediation standards in a future newsletter.</p> <p>The Giant Mine Remediation Project will support talks between the City of Yellowknife and Government of Northwest Territories related to future Land Use Planning. Members of the public are expected to be engaged in those discussions by the Government of Northwest Territories and the City of Yellowknife and will also learn more about the remediation standards through this process.</p>

