

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

July 17, 2023

David Livingstone
Chair
Giant Mine Oversight Board
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Dear David Livingstone:

Thank you for your correspondence of May 16, 2023, concerning the Giant Mine Oversight Board (the Board) 2022 Annual Report and recommendations.

The Board's annual report is an important piece to the overall management of the Giant Mine Remediation Project (the Project). As we progress toward the full remediation of the site, we continue to work with the Board and partners to continue the necessary care and maintenance, fulfilment of regulatory obligations, completion of early works, and risk mitigation activities for the Project. Our government agrees the Project is an opportunity to deliver significant socioeconomic benefits for the region and Indigenous communities.

We remain committed to working with all partners and local communities at each phase of the Project to ensure Giant Mine is remediated effectively and efficiently in a way that will benefit local residents.

We welcome your recommendations and support as the project team continues to work with Indigenous rights holders and partners, and other stakeholders to maximize Indigenous and northern employment and business opportunities.

Maximizing these benefits is a key consideration to the project's implementation plan. Please find enclosed the project team's responses to the Board's four recommendations. The project team remains open to the Board's insights, recommendations and updates as the Project progresses.

Canada 

I look forward to receiving further updates on this important project. I have asked Georgina Lloyd, Assistant Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs, to keep me informed of future discussions that she and her team have with you and the Giant Mine Oversight Board on the advancement of the Giant Mine Remediation Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Vandal".

Hon. Dan Vandal, P.C., M.P.

Encl.

c.c.: The Honourable Caroline Cochrane, M.L.A.
Michael McLeod, M.P.

Giant Mine Remediation Project Responses to Recommendations from the 2022 Giant Mine Oversight Board (GMOB) Annual Report

Recommendation	GMOB Comments ¹	GMOB Recommendation ¹	GMRP Team Response
1. Environment	<p>In response to a previous GMOB recommendation (2019-9), the Project Team began tracking and reporting on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from site activities. 2022 provides the first full year of GHG tracking data. The Project Team assessed options to reduce GHG emissions from the water treatment plant. This assessment resulted in selection of a pellet boiler heating system. It would be useful if the Project Team would develop a metric to assess Project-wide GHG performance, noting that the level of activity will vary year over year.</p> <p>The project does not appear to track its GHG emissions to allow comparisons year over year since the annual level and type of physical work changes. Tracking emissions for all onsite work will show GHG performance trends even though the type of work and its intensity changes year to year.</p>	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends that the GMRP develop and communicate the methodology it uses to track and compare annual GHG emissions.</p>	<p>The MCM tracks and reports on-site greenhouse gas emissions. However, given the short period in which this data has been collected, the GMRP believes there is an insufficient amount of data to complete an accurate comparison of annual GHG emissions. As stated by the GMRP in response to GMOB's comments on the 2022 Status of Environment Report, the Project has committed to further discussions on GHG emissions including a climate change indicator in future reports, once a sufficient amount of data is collected.</p>
2. Environment	<p>The Aquatic Advisory Committee (AAC) was established in 2020 to provide guidance on mitigations and monitoring decisions for Baker Creek and Back Bay. It met four times in 2022. The Project Team suggested this committee be discontinued because of the pending submission of the Fisheries Act Authorization application to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). However, GMOB notes that this Committee is functioning well and may prove useful as an ongoing source of advice and engagement with aquatic experts and knowledge holders as the project moves from planning to operation and monitoring.</p>	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends that the AAC continue to operate on an as-needed basis to provide a venue for updates, to share knowledge, and seek advice on all things related to aquatics management for 2023-24. The Project Team should evaluate with AAC members the need to continue or cease operations after 2024.</p>	<p>The GMRP is in agreement and will continue to hold AAC meetings on an as-needed basis. The next AAC meeting is on June 28, 2023.</p>

¹ This text is taken directly from the Giant Mine Oversight Board 2022 Annual Report

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<p>3. Economy</p>	<p>The Project Team released its first Socio-Economic Strategy in 2018 but backdated it to 2016. The Project then formed the Socio-Economic Advisory Body and the Socio-Economic Working Group in 2018 delegating them the responsibility for leading, coordinating, and integrating progressive socio-economic initiatives for the Project.</p> <p>These two groups met throughout 2022 with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. receiving updates on the Project status, including employment and procurement; b. discussing the updated socio-economic strategy to be released sometime in 2023; and, c. discussing other project-related topics such as a proposed change in the definition of Indigenous Opportunities Considerations (ultimately rejected by the Working Group and the Advisory Board). 	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends the Socio-Economic Working Group meet no more than three or four times a year while the associated Advisory Body meet only once or twice per year. These meetings are time-consuming, expensive and not always well attended. Without metrics to determine if the meetings serve their intended purpose, GMOB questions their value.</p>	<p>In the GMOB Annual Report, it notes that the Project backdated its strategy to 2016 which is incorrect. The Project first developed its Strategy in 2016, but it was an internal working document. In 2018, there was a change in the decision to keep the Strategy internal and the document was updated and made publicly available in September 2019.</p> <p>The Socio-Economic Advisory Body was established in late 2018 and the Working Group in early 2019. However, neither of these groups play the lead role in implementing socio-economic activities for the Project, as this lies with the GMRP team. From the Terms of Reference for the two groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEWG: coordinate and conduct activities related to the implementation of the GMRP’s Socio-Economic Strategy - SEAB: provide strategic advice to the Socio-Economic Working Group and act as senior government champions for the implementation of the SE Working Group’s approach. <p>Regarding frequency of meetings, the Project team has sent out several surveys to Working Group committee members to gauge their interest and effectiveness of the committee. The frequency of meetings was adjusted from every month to every other month based on the response to the surveys. Attendance continues to be strong, with the greater majority of member groups always represented. Individual member representatives continue to change but that is normal for a committee of this size and diversity.</p> <p>The GMRP will continue to monitor and evaluate frequency of these meetings.</p>
<p>4. Economy</p>	<p>The lack of attention to the economics of the Project led GMOB to conduct its own economic effects assessment of the GMRP. This work began in the summer of 2022 prior to the release of the Project’s updated cost estimates. GMOB built a preliminary economic model of the Project based on an in-depth review of the work activities described in the PIP and a high-level accounting of the planned expenditures at the time.</p>	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends that the Project Team consider changing its approach to these meetings to give more attention to the broader economics of the Project and the economic environment in which the Project is taking place. All Parties to the Agreement require better information so they can consider potential actions by their own organizations and look</p>	<p>The Project team is aware that since GMOB completed this economic model, it bilaterally met with all the parties involved in the two GMRP socio-economic committees, therefore the information has been shared with all the parties.</p> <p>GMOB and the Project team met in May of 2023 to go over the findings that are referenced here. The Project team agrees that further discussions are needed on GMOB’s findings. If GMOB is supportive of it, the Project team would like to work with GMOB to present and discuss these findings with the GMRP’s two dedicated</p>

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	<p>The model produced estimates of the GMRP's direct, indirect, and induced contribution to NWT's gross output, Gross Domestic Product, labour income, employment, and indirect government revenues. Greater details regarding the planned expenditures for the Project are needed to improve the precision of the model results.</p>	<p>to the Working Group and Advisory Body meetings as opportunities to co-operate and coordinate.</p>	<p>Socio-Economic committees. This could result in a dedicated agenda item on broader economics of the Project and the economic environment in which the Project is taking place.</p>
<p>5. Economy</p>	<p>GMOB believes that greater participation in future remediation work throughout the NWT requires the Project Team give more attention to the broader NWT business community when considering contracted work. GMOB expects the Project Team to increase its knowledge of the capacities within the NWT business community and investigate opportunities for broader participation in the Project as a direct response to the GNWT's interest in maximizing benefits from remediation projects beyond the Project. GMOB believes these actions can ultimately lower costs. At the same time they will improve the NWT's capacity to capture a higher percentage of the economic benefits expected from future remediation projects in the NWT (e.g., the Norman Wells oilfield, abandoned mines on Great Bear Lake, sumps in the Mackenzie Delta, and oil and gas wells in the Cameron Hills and Beaufort Delta).</p>	<p>Directed to: the GNWT and the Parties to the Environmental Agreement</p> <p>The GNWT has a far greater role and responsibilities for the economic outcomes of the Project than does the federal government, but all Parties to the Environmental Agreement have an important role. If the Socio-Economic Working Group and Advisory Body are to meaningfully contribute to the success of the Project, all Parties must attend and fully participate in meetings.</p>	<p>As a co-proponent, the GNWT is committed to fully participating in the meetings.</p>
<p>6. Engagement</p>	<p>GMOB notes that there is no advocate for the greater boating community in Yellowknife. The Project Team should reach out to general users of the community boat launch in the near future as its plans for the community boat launch and covering of the offshore tailings develop further.</p>	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends that the Project Team call a general meeting of the boating community in Yellowknife, Ndilq and Dettah as a first step in more fully and effectively engaging with boat launch users on the Project Team's plans for public access to the waterfront at the site, and its plans and schedules for the public boat launch.</p>	<p>The GMRP is in agreement and commits to calling a general meeting of the boating communities to engage on Project plans for public access to the waterfront at site and schedules for the public boat launch. The GMRP team is also developing other communications tools (e.g. Frequently Asked Questions, on-site signage, and supporting information pamphlets) to communicate this message beyond the Yellowknife Historical Society and Great Slave Sailing Club. In addition, the Project team is drafting a <i>Public Access Plan</i> which will be submitted to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board for review later this year.</p>

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<p>7. Project Management and Planning</p>	<p>GMOB is pleased that the Project has a back-up pump on site, should this contingency be needed because of another pump failure. However, it took over seven months to address the failure of the original pump. GMOB recognizes that the COVID 19 epidemic introduced delays with procurement and obtaining equipment. In GMOB's view, on-site management should have the authority to immediately purchase all equipment necessary to respond to an emergency.</p>	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends that a summary of all contingency planning exercises and reviews be included as a separate section of the GMRP Annual Report.</p>	<p>The GMRP completes a thorough review of its risk register on an annual basis. The risk register reviews involve ensuring the risk statements are current and accurate; reviewing likelihoods and consequence severities; and updating the project's risk responses. Contingency planning is one risk response used by the project, but other responses are also adopted, as appropriate. The risk register is an input into the GMRP's annual work planning cycle. Activities required to actively manage risk or to put in place contingencies are scoped into the annual Work Package Project Plans (WPPPs) and are implemented at the work package level.</p> <p>However, this is only one way in which the team addresses contingency planning. It is an activity which is inherent in the day-to-day work completed by the team as a whole as they are managing their work packages. Through regular meetings, communication, and collaboration, issues are both identified and mitigated as needed. As site managers, the MCM also has an important role to play. As such, the GMRP thanks the GMOB for its recommendation, but at this time the GMRP does not plan to create a separate report section providing a summary of all contingency planning exercises and reviews.</p>
<p>8. Project Management and Planning</p>		<p>Directed to: CIRNAC</p> <p>GMOB recommends that local management be provided with the appropriate purchasing authority to enable them to respond to any on-site emergency situations without delay.</p>	<p>Should there be an emergency situation, PSPC, along with the Main Construction Manager, has authority to purchase goods and services more quickly than under normal procurement processes and procedures. In this case (pump failure) the other submersible pump was able to handle the required pumping capacity and has been designed to do this as part of redundancy in the system. The time it took to replace the failed pump was not due to the lack of efficient purchasing authority, but the time required to build and deliver the replacement pump. The project has initiated the purchase of a shelf-spare pump to remain at the site and will continue to ensure spares are available.</p>
<p>9. Community Health and Wellness</p>	<p>In 2022 the authors of the Hoèla Weteèts'eèdeè <i>Understanding Community Well-being around Giant Mine Study</i> (also known as 'the Stress Study') finalized the study plan, a survey and protocols, and obtained research ethics approval through Wilfrid Laurier University. The study, scheduled to begin in spring</p>	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>In light of the discontinuation of the Hoèla Weteèts'eèdeè <i>Understanding Community Well-being around Giant Mine Study</i>, GMOB recommends that the Project Team request</p>	<p>On June 6, 2022 the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) advised the GMRP that they were withdrawing from the Hoèla Weteèts'eèdeè <i>Understanding Community Well-being around Giant Mine Study</i>. The Project team met with the members of the study's advisory committee to seek advice with respect to how to proceed.</p>

Recommendation	GMOB Comments ¹	GMOB Recommendation ¹	GMRP Team Response
	<p>2022, did not proceed due to concerns expressed by YKDFN Chief and Council.</p> <p>GMOB is disappointed that the Hoèla Weteèts'eèdeè <i>Understanding Community Well-being around Giant Mine Study</i> is not going ahead. This study was intended to address Measure #10 from the “Report of Environmental Assessment and Reasons for Decision, Giant Mine Remediation Project” (Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB), June 2013), which specifies that there must be an evaluation of “the indirect effects of potential exposures to arsenic on wellness, including stress effects”. This study is also discussed in the Reconciliation section above.</p> <p>The study was, from the outset, a partnership between Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) and YKDFN and was guided by the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP, http://fnigc.ca/ocap), and Data Sharing Agreements between WLU and YKDFN, as well as between WLU and NSMA. The study was designed to be relevant to and culturally appropriate for Yellowknives Dene, with a goal to strengthen community well-being, pride and dignity, Dene values, and sense of connection. More generally, a key goal of the study was to facilitate improvements in stress and mental health in all affected populations in the study area through targeted mitigation and healing activities. GMOB regrets that despite these efforts, the Chief and Council decided to withdraw from the study.</p>	<p>direction from MVEIRB, the responsible Ministers, and the Parties to the Agreement regarding Measure #10 and the evaluation of broader health impacts such as stress effects.</p>	<p>Members of the Advisory Committee, including all Environmental Agreement Signatories, are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wilfrid Laurier University, ▪ the City of Yellowknife, ▪ the North Slave Métis Alliance, ▪ the Giant Mine Oversight Board, ▪ Alternatives North, ▪ Health Canada, ▪ the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services, and ▪ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada <p>After careful deliberation, the committee, unanimously advised on September 15, 2022 that the Project and Research team should no longer proceed with the study. As such, the Project team made the difficult decision to discontinue the wellness study.</p> <p>However, it is the Project Team’s understanding that YKDFN may be interested in carrying out their own independent wellness study. The GMRP response letter to YKDFN on November 16, 2022 expressed the Project’s Team willingness to discuss further, however no conversations have occurred. At this time the Project Team does not feel it’s appropriate to push or pursue this further. YKDFN is best positioned to speak to their decision and next steps.</p>
<p>10. Long-Term Planning</p>	<p>The GMRP used a committee-based approach to develop the PCP RFP, now expected to be released in early 2023. GMOB is disappointed with the delays and remains concerned that PCP development is more than three years behind the schedule set out in the Agreement. GMOB expects that the Project Team will prioritize the development of this important document.</p>	<p>Directed to: the Giant Mine Remediation Project Team</p> <p>GMOB recommends that the PCP be completed and submitted to GMOB for review no later than March 31, 2024.</p>	<p>The GMRP agrees that the PCP development is very important and recognizes that it is behind the schedule set out in the Environmental Agreement. However, this schedule was arbitrary and defined before a full project implementation schedule was realized; a final PCP is not needed until the site remediation is complete (currently scheduled for 2038).</p>

Recommendation	GMOB Comments ¹	GMOB Recommendation ¹	GMRP Team Response
	<p>GMOB expects that the RFP to develop a PCP will be issued in early 2023. GMOB once again strongly recommends that the Project Team not delay this work further and complete the PCP by March 31, 2024.</p>		<p>That said, the GMRP has worked closely with Rights holders and stakeholders over the past several years to develop an inclusive scope of work and has issued a Request for Information (RFI) on CanadaBuys to assess interest within the contracting community and further refine the Request for Proposal (RFP), which will be issued later this year. The GMRP expects the first version of the PCP to be completed by 2024-25.</p>
<p>11. Long-Term Planning</p>	<p>No progress has been reported on a land use plan for the Giant Mine site. On the contrary, it appears that the City of Yellowknife will not conduct significant planning until active remediation of the site is complete, despite the Project Team's ongoing communications regarding the likely characteristics of the site post-remediation.</p> <p>GMOB does not agree with delaying onsite land use planning until after remediation is complete. GMOB remains concerned that proceeding with remediation without a clear land use plan may limit or close off options for future uses of the site. GMOB recommends that on-site land use planning occur in tandem with active remediation given that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Project Team has provided information about the post-remediation landscape (i.e., what areas will be accessible or not for residents' use); and, 2. The City of Yellowknife has the authority to develop a land use plan for the site. <p>Parallel land use planning and remediation processes provide greater opportunities to make adjustments that may be impossible or impractical after remediation is completed.</p>	<p>Directed to: the City of Yellowknife</p> <p>GMOB recommends that onsite land use planning for the Giant Mine site occur in tandem with active remediation and be led by the City of Yellowknife.</p>	<p>N/A – this recommendation is directed to the City of Yellowknife.</p>