
From: 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 Ec
Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2024 9:41 AM
To: 'ed@gmob.ca'
Cc: 'Rj_simpson@gov.nt.ca'; 'Jay_Macdonald@gov.nt.ca'; 'Michael.mcleod@parl.gc.ca'
Subject: Correspondence from the Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister Responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister Responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
Attachments: Enclosure.docx

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 3rd, 2024

David Livingstone
Chair
c/o Ben Nind
Giant Mine Oversight Board
5014 50th Avenue
P.O. Box 1602
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 2P2

Dear Mr. Livingstone:

Thank you for your correspondence concerning the Giant Mine Oversight Board's 2023 Annual Report and recommendations.

The Board's Annual Report is an important piece to the overall management of the Giant Mine Remediation Project. As we progress through the remediation phase of the site, we continue to work with the Board and partners on necessary care and maintenance, fulfilment of regulatory obligations, and risk mitigation activities. We fully agree that the Project is an opportunity to deliver significant socio-economic benefits to the region and Indigenous communities, and our progress to date has been positive.

We remain committed to working with all partners and local communities at every phase of the Project to ensure Giant Mine is remediated effectively and efficiently. Our top priority is ensuring the project benefits local residents, which includes preserving human health and protecting the natural environment.

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

Maximizing these benefits is a key consideration of the Project's implementation plan. The Project team's responses to the Board's nine recommendations are enclosed. We remain open to the Board's insights, recommendations, and updates as the Project progresses.

I look forward to receiving further updates from your team. I have asked Georgina Lloyd, Assistant Deputy Minister, to keep me informed of future discussions that she and her team have with you and the Board on the advancement of the Project.

Sincerely,



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

Encl.

c.c.: The Honourable R.J. Simpson, M.L.A.
The Honourable Jay MacDonald, M.L.A.
Michael McLeod, M.P.



Giant Mine Remediation Project Responses to Recommendations from the Giant Mine Oversight Board (GMOB) 2023 Annual Report

Subject	<u>GMOB Comments</u>¹	<u>GMOB Recommendations</u>²	<u>Giant Mine Project Team Response</u>
Economy	The most recent employment record (2022–23) shows Northern workforce participation at 36% and Northern Indigenous participation at 16%. In both cases, these results are below the employment targets of 55% to 70% and 25% to 35%, respectively. These participation results are lower than the results from 2021–22, when NWT residents accounted for 45% of the Project labour when measured by hours worked.	2023-1 GMOB recommends that the GMRP use its adaptive management process to address underperforming resident labour force participation, with the aim to determine the cause and to revise the Strategy accordingly. GMOB expects the actions taken by the Project Team will result in the percentage of NWT resident and Indigenous labour participating in the project to move toward and ultimately reach the top end of its target range.	Through the revised GMRP Strategy and associated Socio-economic Implementation Plan, the GMRP and partners continue to carry out activities to support local labour capacity. At an upcoming Socio-economic Working Group (SEWG) meeting and subsequent Socio-economic Advisory Board (SEAB) meeting the GMRP will further provide opportunity to review the implementation plan and identify which existing or new initiatives can support reaching the top end of GMRP’s target range.
Communication, Engagement and Reconciliation	While there is clear and demonstrable progress on communications generally, one area that requires more public engagement by the Project Team is the fate of the public boat launch. The Project Team has engaged with the Great Slave Sailing Club and the Great Slave Yacht Club about plans for the public boat launch area. It has committed to continuing and broadening these discussions. However, most of the general boating public are not affiliated with either of	2023-2 GMOB recommends that the Project Team host meetings of the general boating community in Yellowknife, Ndilo and Dettah in 2024 to seek their input on the plans and schedule for the public boat launch redevelopment. The meetings should be documented, and suggestions incorporated into the Project Team’s plans, and results reported in the 2024 GMRP Project Annual Report.	A meeting for the general boating community was held on June 11 th , 2024, at the Yellowknife Historical Society Museum from 7-9 pm. The GMRP will take suggestions received and consider how they may be incorporated into planning, and provide an update on that and any subsequent meetings in the 2024/25 Annual Report to GMOB.

¹ This text is taken directly from the Giant Mine Oversight Body 2023 Annual Report

² This text is taken directly from the Giant Mine Oversight Body 2023 Annual Report

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	<p>these groups and still need to be engaged by the Project Team in discussions about future plans for the site</p>		
<p>Project Management and Planning</p>	<p>Contingency plans are currently required for individual project components on the Project site. The Project Team maintains a risk register and the Project’s Emergency Management and Spill Response Plan guides responses to specific events such as spills. However, contingency planning does not appear to have been completed for large-scale events affecting the entire site</p> <p>-</p> <p>GMOB expects that the outcomes from these activities will include a comprehensive contingency plan that includes regional or site-wide emergency events. Increasing the scale of anticipated emergencies will improve the ability of the Project Team to respond safely and effectively. This plan will also help the Project Team more quickly and effectively resume site operations after such an event, and proactively reduce the potential for exceedances and other operational or regulatory issues.</p>	<p>2023-3</p> <p>GMOB recommends that Project Team contingency planning include events that could affect overall site operations. The planning should include robust protocols for evacuation of the site and ensure that there is contingency planning for security and monitoring of all operational systems on the site. This planning should be completed prior to the start of significant on-site work in 2024. A summary of all contingency planning exercises and reviews is recommended as a separate section of the next GMRP Annual Report.</p>	<p>The Project team takes contingency planning and overall risk assessment very seriously. A robust risk management process and register gets updated on a yearly basis to account for new and existing risks and how the project will mitigate them. Following the 2023 Wildfire season, the GMRP completed a lessons learned exercise with the (Main Construction Manager) MCM and updated relevant plans appropriately. In addition, there is also a Wildfire Incident Action Plan that is part of the Emergency Management and Spill Response Plan.</p> <p>The GMRP intends to implement similar procedures as in 2023 in the event of another evacuation from the site, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to manage the site in such a way that it can be evacuated relatively quickly without significant risk in the short-term; • Follow City of YK and GNWT directives and emergency procedures; • Base decisions on immediate risk to worker H&S first; • Lock the gates to the site (as was done in 2023), allowing access to key personnel only; and • Have key personnel monitor the site should the risk level permit it.

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<p>Project Management and Planning</p>	<p>Incorporating information regarding arsenic release during potential emergency events would identify whether there are increased risks to responding personnel. Effective mitigation measures should be incorporated into any emergency response action for the site</p>	<p>2023-4</p> <p>GMOB recommends that detailed information specific to the risk of arsenic release from forested site areas during a fire be incorporated into the Project Team’s response plan and be communicated to all organizations and entities potentially affected by such an event.</p>	<p>Addressing contamination on site, including how to manage contaminated soils, is part of the Project team’s Closure and Reclamation Plan which was developed following extensive engagement with rights holders, partners, and stakeholders. The plan was approved by the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board and now guides how the Project team undertakes remediation. The ultimate goal of the Closure and Reclamation Plan is to reduce risks on the Giant Mine site, including risks related to arsenic-contaminated soil.</p> <p>With respect to the possibility of wildfire impacting the site, the safety and health of staff, of the general public, and the environment continue to be top priorities that the Project team is focused on. In the event of area wildfires, the greatest and most immediate risk is the fire itself. The Project team takes action to reduce the risk of area wildfire impacting the site; this has included collecting brush and clearing materials from recent construction and moving these away from structures and onto the tailings ponds located within the core of the site. The Project team will continue to monitor and manage the risks on and to the site, considering all information, research, and expertise available to them, to keep the public and environment safe.</p> <p>The Giant Mine Remediation Project is aware of research related to the potential for arsenic to be mobilized from soils during active wildfires. The Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Environment and Climate Change, in partnership with Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, conducted a human health risk assessment (HHRA) with respect to legacy arsenic outside the scope of the Project, and the territorial government continues to monitor legacy arsenic in the area. ECCC (through the NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring</p>

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			<p>Program) is funding a new 3-year project, investigating the impacts of wildfire on the mobility and fate of arsenic in the Yellowknife area. This project is comparing contaminant concentrations and speciation (chemical form) across environmental compartments (land, water, air) immediately after wildfire and through post-fire regeneration. This project aims to evaluate the impacts of wildfires on the biogeochemistry in polluted and unpolluted systems in the Yellowknife area. Understanding the remobilization of legacy contaminants from wildfire will be an important consideration for developments within the historical airsheds of Giant and Con Mines. This project is in its first year and is being lead and conducted by a northern researcher.</p>
<p>Project Management and Planning</p>	<p>The need for a land use plan is necessary given the on-going decisions that need to be made by the Project Team regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the location of critical infrastructure, • the differing degrees of site remediation depending on location, • potential interest in land by the City of Yellowknife and Yellowknives Dene First Nation, • the potential to unnecessarily close off critical infrastructure options for treating the underground arsenic trioxide, • the implications of the ongoing GMOB Research Program, and 	<p>2023-5</p> <p>GMOB recommends the City of Yellowknife, GNWT, and the Project Team immediately undertake regular, formal communications with the Parties and the public regarding their land-use planning process for the Project site, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what the process looks like, • where they are in the process, • the public engagement process, and • their overall vision for the development of these sites 	<p>The project team has already begun to undertake these recommendations. For instance by providing further clarity with the constraints map for the Giant Mine site that outlines general designations for access and development restrictions throughout the Site. This information was discussed and shared with the City of Yellowknife in November 2022. The City has noted that this information will help inform their upcoming <i>Yellowknife Community Plan</i>, slated for completion in 2028. When this process occurs, the GMRP is happy to participate in any processes led by the City as they advance the next version of the Community Plan.</p>

Subject	GMOB Comments ¹	GMOB Recommendations ²	Giant Mine Project Team Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development of the Perpetual Care Plan 		
<p>Project Management and Planning</p>	<p>GMOB expects the Project Team’s designs to consider GMOB’s ongoing research toward a permanent solution for the arsenic trioxide dust stored in the underground chambers. The temporary nature of freezing the arsenic trioxide dust in underground chambers and the search for a permanent solution needs to be incorporated into designs so remediation work does not compromise a permanent solution. GMOB expects that the Project Team and GMOB will work closely together to achieve the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Project Team is aware of research developments and their implications for site remediation. GMOB is aware of any Project plans or work that may interfere with the development and implementation of a permanent solution. <p>GMOB expects the City of Yellowknife, the GNWT and the Project Team to finalize the post-closure land-use constraints map and use it to inform remediation options and decisions.</p>	<p>2023-6</p> <p>GMOB recommends the Project Team coordinate the development of the Perpetual Care Plan with the GMOB Research Program so that planning for the basic site requirements (space and pad) for future arsenic trioxide roaster waste treatment facilities and transformed waste material storage (pilot and full scale) is fully integrated. These treatment facilities should be included in the upcoming Site Infrastructure Design Plan (Part 2) and will also be addressed directly in the development and application of the Perpetual Care Plan.</p>	<p>The Project is three years into the implementation of the Closure and Reclamation Plan of the Giant Mine site that was developed following extensive engagement with rights holders, partners, and approved by the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board. All design decisions, closure objectives, as well as closure activities have been decided and are fully integrated into our implementation plan and master schedule.</p> <p>The project will ensure that GMOB is provided a copy of the most current version of the constraints map that will detail areas of the site that could be suitable for any future technology deemed as a permanent solution to the stored arsenic trioxide. Recognizing the results are at an early stage, the GMRP will await further results prior to considering any changes to the current remedial plan. The Perpetual Care Plan will address improvements in records management, communication with future generations, long-term access to funds for the Project and analysis of different possible scenarios that might affect the Perpetual Care of the Project. The Project looks forward to discussing how the results of future research get captured, documented incorporated into the PCP.</p>

Subject	<u>GMOB Comments</u> ¹	<u>GMOB Recommendations</u> ²	<u>Giant Mine Project Team Response</u>
	<p>GMOB expects these constraints will affect land-use planning, short-term project management and long-term planning. GMOB expects the potential location of any arsenic trioxide dust treatment and storage facility infrastructure to be factored into longer-term plans.</p>		
<p>Community Health and Well-Being</p>	<p>The first draft of the Perpetual Care Plan (PCP) was to be provided to GMOB by the GMRP in 2020. Instead, an Advisory Task Force was established to guide the development of the PCP, which has caused its delay. The Task Force comprised the Parties and key stakeholders, and worked collaboratively to develop a detailed preliminary framework for the PCP. In 2022, the Task Force completed the guiding requirements for the PCP. The PCP requirements were given to Public Services and Procurement Canada, which prepared a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) based on the guidance document. The RFP closing date is April 15, 2024. Following the selection of the successful contractor, which may take several months, the work is anticipated to take between two to three years. GMOB wants to ensure that key stakeholders are part of the RFP</p>	<p>2023-7</p> <p>GMOB recommends the Project Team include a representative of the Giant Mine Working Group (GMWG) in the evaluation process to select the successful contractor for the development of the draft PCP. The GMWG should be involved in the review of draft documents as the contract progresses.</p>	<p>The contract for the Perpetual Care Plan has been awarded.</p> <p>The opportunity and consideration of an additional member was previously offered to GMOB and was turned down. The GMRP appreciates GMOB’s continued encouragement for rights holders and stakeholders to have an active role in the development of the PCP. Once the consultant has been onboarded, it is planned to have a PCP Task Force meeting to discuss the proposed work plan and meet the consultants. These discussions will also provide guidance as to the role of the PCP Task Force moving forward through schedule milestone dates and deliverables.</p>

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	<p>review process and involved in reviewing drafts of the PCP as the contract progresses.</p>		
<p>Community Health and Well-Being</p>	<p>GMOB expects the Project Team’s plans and designs will take into consideration GMOB’s research toward a permanent solution for the arsenic trioxide dust temporarily stored in the underground chambers. The Project Team’s planning and communications about the site should include information as to the temporary nature of the frozen shell and the search for a permanent solution. Advance planning and design must ensure that remediation work does not compromise the development and implementation of a permanent solution.</p>	<p>2023-8</p> <p>GMOB recommends to the GNWT, the City of Yellowknife, and the Project Team that on-site land use planning occur in tandem with active remediation and be led by the City of Yellowknife. Parallel land use planning and remediation processes provide greater opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate risks of closing off options for a permanent solution to the arsenic trioxide dust. • Align remediation plans with desired post-closure access and use of the site. • Make cost-effective adjustments that may be impossible or impractical after remediation is completed. 	<p>As part of post-closure considerations, the GMRP developed a final “constraints map” for the Giant Mine site that outlines general designations for access and development restrictions throughout the Site. This information has been discussed and shared with the City of Yellowknife, and the City has noted it will help inform their upcoming <i>Yellowknife Community Plan</i>, slated for completion in 2028. As part of this, GMRP is happy to participate in any processes led by the City as they advance the next version of the Community Plan.</p>
<p>Community Health and Well-Being</p>	<p>GMOB expects the proposal evaluation and selection process for the development of the PCP will be concluded in 2024. GMOB understands that Plan development may take two to three years once the contract is issued.</p>	<p>2023-9</p> <p>GMOB recommends that the Project Team provide to GMOB the expected completion date of the PCP.</p>	<p>The Contract for the development of the Perpetual Care Plan was awarded June 3rd, 2024. The first phase of the contract will be the development of a work plan and schedule. As noted in the response to recommendation 2023-7, the intent is to schedule a meeting with the PCP Task Force, of which GMOB is a participant. This meeting will provide the opportunity to discuss the overall workplan and associated timelines.</p>

In addition to the recommendations laid out in the report from GMOB, the GMRP would like to address some additional comments found in the body of the report in order to correct some misinformation.

Subject	Page	GMOB Comments ³	Giant Mine Project Team Response
Environment	8	The Yellowknife wildfire evacuations in August and September 2023 included the Project site. The Project Team has yet to clearly outline the measures taken to secure and safeguard the site, remediation infrastructure (e.g., the water treatment facility), and safety equipment; and, to ensure project security and continuity	<p>The GMRP notes that the measures were communicated to GMOB on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email of Aug 16, 2023 from Natalie Plato to Ben Nind • Email of Aug 23, 2023 from Natalie Plato to Ben Nind • Email of Aug 25, 2023 from Natalie Plato to Ben Nind <p>In addition, a verbal update from the project team was provided on October 12, 2023 at a Working Group meeting where GMOB was in attendance. A verbal update was also provided on January 11, 2024 during the GMOB semi-annual meeting. The project is always available to discuss any further details regarding site wildfire preparedness.</p>
Environment	11	GMOB will work with the City of Yellowknife, the GNWT and the Project Team to finalize and assess the post-closure land use constraints map.	The post-closure land use constraints map was finalized in 2022. Please see response to 2023-8 for additional information.
Economy	15	The Project Team identifies “maximizing benefits” as one of its main objectives.	<p>The overall goals of the Project are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize public and worker health and safety risks • Minimize the release of contaminants from the site to the surrounding environment • Remediate the site in a manner that instills public confidence • Implement an approach that is cost effective and robust over the long term <p>Maximizing benefits is an important objective but it is not an overarching main goal.</p>

³ This text is taken directly from the Giant Mine Oversight Body 2023 Annual Report

Subject	Page	GMOB Comments ³	Giant Mine Project Team Response
Project Management and Planning	25	GMOB expects the City of Yellowknife, the GNWT and the Project Team to finalize the post-closure land-use constraints map and use it to inform remediation options and decisions.	Please refer to the response to 2023-5 and 2023-8. The GMRP would like to clarify that it is the remediation decisions that have informed this document; it is not intended to be used the other way around.
Project Management and Planning	27	<p>During the evacuation the gate access remained open for certain contractors, and there was no on-site security.</p> <p>...</p> <p>While the City of Yellowknife was shut down, the Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, and local and outside fire departments actively monitored the municipality and could effectively respond to emergency events. There seems to have been no equivalent system in place for the Project site. At a minimum, the site should have been properly secured due to potential safety risks related to unauthorized access, potential vandalism, and equipment loss and/or failure (e.g., the water treatment plant).</p>	<p>During the evacuation the site was secured and the gates were left closed and protected. Certain contractors did have access to the site as they needed to retrieve their equipment, as required, to assist fire break efforts.</p> <p>The GMRP also has an agreement with the City of Yellowknife Fire Department for Emergency Services and should this have been required the City of Yellowknife would respond.</p> <p>The GMRP is confident that the measures taken did not constitute a security risk. In addition, the Project and site personnel responded efficiently and effectively to the emergency evacuation order, and began to prepare proactively and implement actions to depart the site prior to the order being announced.</p>
Community Health and Well-Being	32	The 2023 Acute Arsenic Assessment indicates toddlers could be exposed to a considerably higher amount of arsenic if they eat a small amount of contaminated soil.	It is more accurate to indicate that the 2023 Acute Arsenic Assessment noted that unacceptable acute health risks are predicted for toddlers potentially exposed to high levels of arsenic from intentionally or accidentally ingesting <u>unusually large</u> amounts of soil ⁴ .
Long-Term Planning	35	GMOB expects that the Project Team will reconsider the existing proposed plan for remediation of the current boat launch/parking area and the Great Slave Sailing Club (“Sailing Club”) and Yellowknife Historical Society (“Historical Society”) lease areas. Remediation and reconstruction are planned to begin in 2028 and be complete by 2036. The current plan is for	<p>The Sailing Club area will be remediated first, anticipated from 2028 to 2030. At this time all users will share the current Public boat launch.</p> <p>Once the Great Slave Sailing Club area is remediated, it will be opened as the new Public Boat launch for the period of approximately 2030 to 2038 while remediation takes place at the remainder of the townsite.</p>

⁴ WSP (2023). *Acute Human Health Risk Assessment- Arsenic Giant Mine Remediation Project- Final Report*, iii.

Subject	<u>Page</u>	<u>GMOB Comments</u> ³	<u>Giant Mine Project Team Response</u>
		the general boating public to share the current Sailing Club area for lake access until the current boat launch/parking area is remediated. Both groups are to then share the current boat launch/parking area until remediation of the Sailing Club area is completed.	This plan was developed in conjunction with input from the boating community, including the Great Slave Sailing Club.