



NIRB File No.: 12MN036

April 12, 2024

The Honourable Dan Vandal, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Northern Affairs, Prairies Economic Development Canada, and the Canadian
Northern Economic Development Agency
Government of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Sent via email and courier: dan.vandal@parl.gc.ca

Re: Reconsideration Report and Recommendations of the Nunavut Impact Review Board Regarding a Significant Modification to the Back River Gold Project as Proposed by B2Gold Corporation (formerly Sabina Gold & Silver Corp) under the “Back River Energy Centre” Project Proposal

Dear Honourable Dan Vandal:

As outlined in the Notice and Procedural Direction¹ provided to the Responsible Minister(s) and B2Gold Corporation (at that time Sabina Gold & Silver Corp, now referenced as B2Gold or Proponent), on January 20, 2023, the NIRB initiated a formal reconsideration of the Terms and Conditions of Project Certificate No. 007 to reflect the submission of the Proponent’s “Back River Energy Centre” Project Proposal (Energy Centre Proposal or Proposal), a proposed amendment to the approved Back River Gold Project (NIRB File No.: 12MN036).

As set out in the Plain Language summary filed with the NIRB:

The proposed modification to the Approved Project is the addition of the Back River Energy Centre, a wind generation facility, solar panel array and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) capable of generating approximately 59 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy with battery storage capacities of 50 megawatt-hours (MWh).²

The detailed scope of activities assessed by the NIRB under the Proposal is set out in Section 1.4 of this Report, and the discussion in this section identifies the scope of the Proposal in the context

¹ NIRB Document ID Nos. 342634 (English) and 342767 (Inuktitut).

² The Proponent’s 2023 Impact Statement Addendum NIRB Document ID No. 343262 at p. i.

of the original Back River Gold Mine Project as previously approved to proceed in 2017 located 400 kilometres (km) (249 miles) southwest of the community of Cambridge Bay, 95 km (59 miles) southeast of the southern end of Bathurst Inlet, and 520 km (323 miles) northeast of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

The Project Description and the 2023 Impact Statement Addendum submitted for the Proposal (2023 IS Addendum), and associated documentation for the Energy Centre Proposal can be accessed directly online via the NIRB's Public Registry at <https://www.nirb.ca/project/125740>.

As specified in the Board's Notice to the Minister and the Proponent, the reconsideration process for assessing the Energy Centre Proposal involved several opportunities for parties, designated representatives from potentially affected Kitikmeot and Northern Saskatchewan communities and interested members of the public to comment on the Proposal and the 2023 IS Addendum and share their knowledge and concerns with the Board. The Board's process included the following key steps:

- An information request (IR) period;
- A technical review period;
- An in-person Technical Meeting, Community Roundtable and Pre-Hearing Conference conducted in Cambridge Bay, the closest directly affected community that could accommodate the meeting, in October 2023;
- The filing of Final Written Submissions and presentation materials in advance of a Public Hearing; and
- A three-day in-person Public Hearing, including a technical session and Community Roundtable hosted in Cambridge Bay on February 27-29, 2024.

The enclosed Report summarizes the NIRB's assessment of the potential ecosystemic and socio-economic effects of the Energy Centre Proposal and conveys the Board's associated conclusions and recommendations. After due consideration of all relevant written and oral submissions received by the Board, the Board has concluded that:

- the Energy Centre Proposal has the potential to have significant positive ecosystemic and socio-economic impacts by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 50%, reducing fuel consumption, reducing the number of trips on the Winter Ice Road for fuel transport to the Mine by 350 round trips per year, and reducing air emissions and noise compared to the approved Back River Gold Mine Project which relied on the use of diesel generators for power generation; and
- the potential for significant adverse ecosystemic and socio-economic effects associated with the Energy Centre Proposal can be adequately prevented, mitigated, or adaptively managed by recommended revisions to the Terms and Condition of NIRB Project Certificate No.: 007, designed to improve mitigation, adaptive management, and monitoring programs for the Proposal and the fulfillment of the commitments provided by the Proponent to interested parties during the reconsideration process.

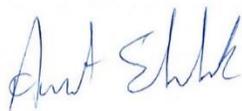
Consequently, the Board recommends to the Responsible Minister(s) that the Energy Centre Proposal should be allowed to proceed at this time, and recommends:

- an update to NIRB Project Certificate No. 007 to reflect the transfer of ownership of the approved Back River Project from Sabina Gold and Silver Corp. to B2Gold Corporation;
- revisions to 11 Terms and Conditions of NIRB Project Certificate No. 007 (#9 and #10 Noise and Vibration; #12 Permafrost; #34 Vegetation; #39, #41, and #51 Caribou; #37, #45, and #50 Terrestrial Wildlife; and #53 Birds and Bird Habitat) as discussed in Section 8;
- the addition of two (2) new ecosystemic Terms and Conditions to NIRB Project Certificate No. 007 in relation to Migratory Birds and Traditional Land Use – Harvesting, and one (1) socio-economic Term and Condition (Inuit and Local Employment/Contracting); and
- additions to the monitoring and reporting programs applicable to the modified Back River Gold Project as outlined in Sections 8.1 and 8.3.

Translated versions of this Reconsideration Report and Recommendations are being prepared in Inuktitut and will be available as soon as possible.

Should you have questions or require clarification regarding this matter, please contact the NIRB's Executive Director, Robbin Sinclair at (867) 983-4608 or rsinclair@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Albert Ehloak
Vice-Chairperson
Nunavut Impact Review Board

cc: The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., Minister of Environment and Climate Change
The Honourable Diane Lebovillier, P.C., Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, P.C., Minister of Transport
The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
The Honourable Lori Idlout, MP for Nunavut
The Honourable P.J. Akeagok, Premier of Nunavut
Aluki Kotierk, President, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
Robert Greenley, President, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Andrew Nakashuk, Chairperson, Nunavut Planning Commission
Lottie Toomasie, Chairperson, Nunavut Water Board