



SCREENING DECISION REPORT
NIRB FILE No.: 24XN038

NPC File No.: 150467

December 4, 2024

This Screening Decision Report provides the Nunavut Impact Review Board’s (NIRB or Board) screening determination associated with West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.’s (WKR or the Proponent) “Grays Bay Road and Port” project proposal (the Proposal). The NIRB’s screening of the Proposal was conducted under Article 12, Section 12.4.4(b) of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)* and s. 89(1)(a)(i) and (ii) of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act, S.C. 2013, c. 14, s. 2 (NuPPAA)*. Following the Board’s screening of the “Grays Bay Road and Port” project proposal, including consideration of the Proponent’s online application materials and comment submissions received by the NIRB to date, the Board has concluded that, due to the potential for the Proposal to have significant adverse ecosystemic and socio-economic effects, the Grays Bay Road and Port Proposal requires a Review under Article 12, Part 5 or 6 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and Part 3 of the *NuPPAA*.

As the Board has concluded that **the Proposal requires further assessment by the NIRB, which is best facilitated through a full environmental review**, the Board has provided this Screening Decision Report to the responsible Minister for consideration pursuant to s. 92 of the *NuPPAA*.

OUTLINE OF SCREENING DECISION REPORT

- 1) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK
- 2) PROJECT REFERRAL
- 3) PROJECT OVERVIEW & THE NIRB ASSESSMENT PROCESS
- 4) ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF *NuPPAA*
- 5) VIEWS OF THE BOARD
- 6) PARTICULAR ISSUES OR CONCERNS IDENTIFIED BY NIRB
- 7) PARTICULAR ISSUES OR CONCERNS IDENTIFIED BY NIRB
- 8) NIRB DETERMINATION
- 9) CONCLUSION

The primary objectives of the NIRB are set out in Section 12.2.5 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)* and are confirmed by s. 23 of the *NuPPAA*:

Nunavut Agreement, Article 12, Section 12.2.5: In carrying out its functions, the primary objectives of NIRB shall be at all times to protect and promote the existing and future well-being of the residents and communities of the Nunavut Settlement Area, and to protect the ecosystemic integrity of the Nunavut Settlement Area. NIRB shall take into account the well-being of the residents of Canada outside the Nunavut Settlement Area.

The purpose of screening is provided for under s. 88 of the *NuPPAA*:

NuPPAA, s. 88: The purpose of screening a project is to determine whether the project has the potential to result in significant ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts and, accordingly, whether it requires a review by the Board...

To determine whether a review of a project is required, the NIRB is guided by the considerations as set out under s. 89(1) of *NuPPAA*:

NuPPAA, s. 89(1): The Board must be guided by the following considerations when it is called on to determine, on the completion of a screening, whether a review of the project is required:

- (a) a review is required if, in the Board's opinion,
 - i. the project may have significant adverse ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts or significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities,
 - ii. the project will cause significant public concern, or
 - iii. the project involves technological innovations, the effects of which are unknown; and
- (b) a review is not required if, in the Board's opinion,
 - i. the project is unlikely to cause significant public concern, and
 - ii. its adverse ecosystemic and socioeconomic impacts are unlikely to be significant, or are highly predictable and can be adequately mitigated by known technologies.

It is noted that s. 89(2) of the *NuPPAA* provides that the considerations set out in paragraph 89(1)(a) prevail over those set out in paragraph 89(1)(b) of the *NuPPAA*.

As set out under s. 92(1) of the *NuPPAA*, upon conclusion of the screening process, the Board must provide its written report the Minister:

NuPPAA, s. 92(1): The Board must submit a written report to the responsible Minister containing a description of the project that specifies its scope and indicating that:

- (a) a review of the project is not required;
- (b) a review of the project is required; or
- (c) the project should be modified or abandoned.

After completing a review of all the information received, taking into account the information the Proponent and parties have provided to date, and taking into account the Board’s determination of the significance of potential adverse ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts of the project¹, it is the opinion of the NIRB that the project proposal **should undergo a full environmental review** as the proposed project may have significant adverse ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts, significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities, and will cause significant public concern.

REFERRAL OF THE GRAYS BAY ROAD AND PORT PROPOSAL

On August 6, 2024, the NIRB received a referral to screen West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.’s “Grays Bay Road and Port” project proposal from the Nunavut Planning Commission (the Commission), which noted that the project proposal is outside the area of an applicable regional land use plan.

Pursuant to Article 12, Sections 12.4.1 and 12.4.4 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 87 of the *NuPPAA*, the NIRB commenced screening this project proposal and assigned it file number 24XN038.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND THE NIRB ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. Project Description:

The Proponent intends to build, operate, and maintain: a port at Grays Bay; a 230-kilometre controlled access all-season road; a station at the Jericho mine site; and an ice road to connect with the south at the Nunavut/Northwest Territories Border. Grays Bay facilities, the all-weather access road and the Jericho Station would be open year-round; however, the port at Grays Bay would accept vessels only during the open water season.

The project is proposed to start in December 2029 and be constructed (both pre-construction and construction) over the course of five (5) years, with operations starting in 2034 and continuing for at least 75 years. As the project facilities are designed as permanent, there are no plans for closure and reclamation other than areas used solely for pre-construction/construction activities that are not required for ongoing operations and maintenance. Commercial users of the road and/or port facilities may be required to pay tolls or fees to use various portions of the proposed project.

¹Significance was assessed by the Board with regard to the factors outlined in s. 90 of the *NuPPAA*.

2. Scoping

As required under s. 86(1) of the *NuPPAA*, the Board accepts the scope of the “Grays Bay Road and Port” project as set out by WKR in the project proposal. The scope of the project proposal includes the following undertakings, works, or activities:

1. Port at Grays Bay

a. During Construction Phase

- Stationary construction camp
- Dredging
- Potential disposal at sea of dredge materials
- Temporary winter roads
- An ice-re-enforced fuel barge(s) frozen in annually
- Temporary airstrip
- Temporary storage of explosives
- Marine aids to navigation
- May develop quarries in port area
- May use desalinated marine water as a water source
- Approximately two (2) freighter (sealift) sailings and around 60 to 100 offload barge trips to stage materials for the first season of construction at the port site
- One (1) sealift and barge for resupply annually with resupply volume less than initial mobilization

b. Operations Phase

- Permanent accommodations for approx. 80 people with temporary accommodations for 150
- Two (2) deep water wharves suitable for 100,000 deadweight tonnes ore-bulk-oil vessels (Panamax size)
- One (1) barge berth
- A small craft harbour including a boat launch and annually installed floating docks, during the open-water season, and may include a breakwater
- 10 million litres fuel storage including unloading and refueling facilities
- an 1,800 metre (6,000 foot) airstrip including a loading area, passenger hangar, communication building and aircraft refueling and parking areas
- Two (2) tugs providing berthing assistance to vessels
- Transloading infrastructure
- Provide moorage and support for commercial, government, small vessels as well as community-based travelers
- Explosives storage, offices, parking areas, laydown areas (e.g., containers and liquids), diesel-fueled power supply, water supply, wastewater, solid waste, administration, communication, maintenance garages, and emergency response facilities
- Materials storage, staging and handling facilities at Grays Bay Port, with additional areas reserved for future third party users but not included in this application
- One (1) sealift and barge for resupply annually with resupply volume less than initial mobilization

2. A 230-kilometre Controlled All-season Access Road Between Grays Bay (Kogloктоаkyok) and the Jericho Mine site (Station)
 - a. During Construction Phase
 - 40 quarries and borrow areas and roads
 - Installation of temporary crossings to assist with movement of equipment and supplies before
 - 4 mobile camps
 - Temporary winter roads
 - Potential use of High Lake, Ulu, and their quarry sites to store and maintain equipment and supplies, stockpile granular material, store fuel and provide helicopter landing sites
 - b. During Operations Phase
 - Approximately every 3rd quarry permanent with storage of explosives
 - Approximately 230 water crossings including bridges and culverts

3. Staging at the Jericho Mine site
 - a. During Construction Phase
 - Staging Construction Camp
 - transshipment facility and laydown area for construction equipment and materials
 - construction materials would be transported from the Nunavut/Northwest Territories border annually on ice road
 - b. During Operations Phase
 - permanent accommodations for approx. 3 people
 - fuel storage and refueling facilities for up to 20 million litres
 - vehicle parking areas, office, weather station
 - resupply would be completed via the road from the Nunavut/northwest Territories border annually on the ice road

4. Annual construction of a winter road to connect the Jericho Mine to the ice road at the Nunavut/Northwest Territories
 - The construction and operation of the winter ice road would start the first winter of construction and continue every winter for the life of the project.

3. Inclusion or Exclusion to Scoping List

The NIRB notes that WKR stated that the project proposal did not include use of the proposed project by third parties (e.g., mines, utilities such as power and communication) and additional road width for other purposes beyond its current design; however, planning in the project area has included potential third-party infrastructure. Therefore, any projects that would use the proposed project in the future would require a separate assessment, including the expansion of fuel storage facilities or other storage areas used by these third parties. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Areas set aside by WKR Future development or by third party users including:
 - Additional laydown areas;
 - Explosives manufacture and storage area;

- Areas for mineral concentrate facilities (two (2) storage structure with combined capacity of around 1.3 million tonnes) and associated loading/conveyance infrastructure;
- Airstrip expansion to 8,000 feet (2,438 m);
- Additional fuel storage tanks to increase storage capacity to 160 million litres;
- Potential use of roadway for additional utilities such as power and communication; and
- Marine shipping by third parties.

Furthermore, the assessment of this proposed project does not include any approval to explore the Arcadia Bay Property or the alignment for mineral resources.

4. Key Stages of the Screening Process

The following key stages were completed:

| Date | Stage |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| August 6, 2024 | Receipt of project proposal and positive conformity determination Outside the area of an applicable regional land use plan (Land Use Plan) from the NPC |
| August 29, 2024 | Scoping pursuant to s. 86(1) of the <i>NuPPAA</i> |
| September 24, 2024 | Public engagement and comment request |
| October 21, 2024 | Ministerial extension requested from the Minister of Northern Affairs |
| October 30, 2024 & November 22 2024 | Receipt of public comments |
| November 14, 2024 | Proponent provided with an opportunity to address comments/concerns raised by public |
| November 15, 2024 | Proponent responded to comments/concerns raised by public |
| December 4, 2024 | NIRB issues recommendation to Responsible Ministers |

5. Public Comments and Concerns

Notice regarding the NIRB’s screening of this project proposal was distributed on September 24, 2024, to community organizations in Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak, Kugaaruk, as well as to relevant federal and territorial government agencies, Inuit organizations and other parties with an interest in the area or its resources. The NIRB requested parties review the proposal and by October 14, 2024, provide comments or concerns on specific matters:

- Whether the project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology; (and providing any recommended mitigation measures); and

- Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal including if a Review is required any additional factors that should be considered as part of that process.

The comment deadline was later extended to October 30, 2024, at the request of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, and by that date the NIRB received comments from the following parties. On November 22, 2024, the Board received additional public comments.

| Commenting Party | NIRB Doc ID No. |
|---|------------------------|
| Kitikmeot Inuit Association (KIA) | 351931 |
| Government of Nunavut (GN) | 351941 |
| Government of Canada (GoC) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) • Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) • Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) • Health Canada (HC) • Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) • Transport Canada (TC) | 351940 |
| Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization (Kugluktuk HTO) | 351951 |
| Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) | 351831 |
| Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) | 351790 |
| Tłı̄chǝ Government (Tłı̄chǝ) | 351943 |
| Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) | 351877 |
| Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) | 351922 |
| Athabasca Denesùliné Néné Land Corporation (ADNLC) | 351957 |
| Caribou Guardians Coalition | 351935 |
| L Anaija | 352272 |
| S Napacheekadluk | 352273 |
| S Tungilik | 352274 |
| Sandra | 352275 |

The Proponent and all commenting parties identified the key issues and concerns about the potential for significant adverse impacts associated with the type of project development proposed in the “Grays Bay Road and Port” project proposal, as set out in Article 12, Section 12.4.4(b) of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 92(2)(b) of *NuPPAA*. Further, all parties agreed to work together in the assessment to ensure the Board could make an informed decision. Several parties also supported using data from the documents already submitted to the Board at the commencement of the Board’s previous assessment of an earlier version of the Grays Bay Road and Port project proposal (NIRB File No. 17XN011) (assuming the information continues to be applicable to this assessment). For the complete set of parties’ comments, please refer to Appendix A, but a summary of topics raised by commenting parties included concerns about:

- Impacts on terrestrial and marine species, especially caribou from the Bathurst and Dolphin and Union herds
- Impact on the terrestrial environment such as topography, freshwater and groundwater, permafrost, habitat fragmentation

- Impacts on the socio-economic environment
- Impacts to Inuit Qaujimaningit and Indigenous Knowledge including human health and wellness
- Cumulative impacts of the Road on the potential development of other projects in the Kitikmeot region or basin-opening effects
- Potential transboundary impacts given the proximity to the Northwest Territories border and the proposed connection to the Tibbitt to Contwoyto Winter Road.

Parties comment submissions also provided advice to the Board regarding the expertise required to conduct a thorough assessment, identifying that additional assessment beyond screening was required, and identifying topics of interest that should be included in a Review level assessment.

6. Comments and Concerns with respect to Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous and Community Knowledge

The following is a summary of the comments and concerns received with respect to Inuit Qaujimaningit², Indigenous and Community Knowledge:

Nunavut

Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Association

- Noted that they do not support the project, because the Dolphin and Union caribou are at a critical low level and the experience of caribou and other roads in Nunavut show that caribou do not like crossing roads;
- Noted work would take place in key caribou calving grounds and other key habitat areas;
- Noted that old exploration sites are still being cleaned up and the land needs to be kept healthy;
- Noted this would be a road to nowhere and would not benefit communities; and
- Noted there are already existing mines and exploration sites in the region and that there is insufficient capacity to fill currently available jobs.

Northwest Territories

Caribou Guardians Coalition

- Considered the proposed project to likely cause significant adverse impacts to caribou and suggested that the project undergo a full environmental review.
- Also expressed concern about:
 - Proximity to the Bathurst caribou calving grounds;
 - Habitat fragmentation from the road and the road becoming a barrier to caribou migration patterns, including blocking key post-calving migrations routes around Contwoyto Lake;
 - Increased predation, as wolves use roads to travel faster and longer distances; and
 - Potential illegal harvest and meat wastage as managing hunters' all year access on a road is expensive and difficult.

² Inuit Qaujimaningit encompasses Inuit traditional knowledge (and variations thereof) as well as Inuit epistemology as it relates to Inuit Societal Values and Inuit Knowledge (both contemporary and traditional).

Inuvialuit Game Council

- Requested to be consulted along with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation as the Inuvialuit Game Council represents the Inuvialuit in wildlife interests and matters.
- Expressed concern in relation to potential construction of staging area in Tuktoyaktuk, NWT with the potential increase in shipping traffic and disturbances, including increased ocean noise pollution/acoustics, and increased shipping.
- Reiterated concerns on the interaction with the Bathurst and Dolphin and Union herds.
- Requested any review include:
 - Impacts and potential risks to Marine Protected Areas namely Tarium Niryutait Marine Protected Area and Anguniaqvia Niqiqyuam Marine Protected Area;
 - Impacts to travel routes on sea ice (including traditional activity and knowledge and community knowledge); and
 - Cumulative effects should also include impacts of increased noise pollution to the marine environment as a result of the increased ship traffic.
- Requested that scoping include:
 - sea ice crossings and sea ice habitat for Bathurst and Dolphin and Union Caribou;
 - all fish species, not just Recreational and Aboriginal fisheries as defined in the *Fisheries Act*;
 - sea ice habitat and migratory routes for ringed seals, bearded seals and walrus;
 - habitat use and impacts to beluga, bowhead, arctic char (in freshwater and ocean) and Arctic cod;
 - all terrestrial and Marine *Species at Risk* should be discussed, not just those listed as “at risk” by COSEWIC.
- Requested that contingency plans should include:
 - Transboundary coordination and communication plans for emergency or spill response; and
 - Avoidance, Mitigation and Offsetting Measures specifically related to fisheries offsetting should encompass all fisheries, not only commercial, recreational and Aboriginal fisheries.

Tłchq Government (Tłchq)

- Concerned over the road’s potential impacts on caribou, caribou migration, and Tłchq harvesting rights, as well as potential impacts from future phases of a road that may go into Mqwhì Gogha Dè Nıłtlèè, to the Nunavut Border, and potentially beyond.
 - Disruption of the Kòk’etì Ekwò (Bathurst Caribou) herd's natural migration from its calving grounds to its post-calving and summer ranges—an area with rich habitat the herd depends on every summer.
 - the ability for ekwò to move south to Tłchq traditional lands where Tłchq rely on ekwò to exercise their constitutionally protected harvesting rights and to practice Tłchq language, culture, and way of life.
 - Potential illegal harvesting of the Bathurst herd along with meat wastage has been well documented on the Tibbit to Contwoyto Winter Road and is contributing to the decline of the Bathurst herd.

- The Tłıchǵ desire to continue collaborating on a balanced approach relating to the protection of caribou habitat and migration of the shared herds, while at the same time recognizing room for types of sustainable economic development.
- the impacts from blocking this key migration corridor, the dire state of the Bathurst herd, and the management actions and sacrifices Tłıchǵ are taking to try to save this herd, a discussion on alternate routes or variations should be considered before further decisions are made.

Wek'èezhì Renewable Resource Board

- Stated there is a likelihood of adverse effects to caribou and their habitat from this project if they are not properly mitigated against as the Project is located within the range of ekwò (barren-ground caribou), which are listed as Threatened under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* and assessed as Threatened under the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife (COSEWIC) in Canada. Specifically, the proposed project occurs within the calving and summer range of the Kòk'etì Ekwò (Bathurst Caribou) herd, which spends its winters primarily in Wek'èezhì. The Kòk'etì Ekwò herd has declined substantially over the last three decades, and its herd status was listed as at a “critical low” by the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee in its 2024 Action Plan.
- Noted loss to sensitive habitat for ekwò from direct disturbance and from reduced use of habitat near infrastructure.
- Noted direct and indirect impacts to ekwò movement from the all-season road, including impacts to their migration patterns and from the barrier effect of the road.
- Noted the risk of increased human access causing unsustainable harvest of species at risk.

Saskatchewan

Athabasca Denesųłiné NéNé Land Corporation

- Strongly recommend that a full environmental review is required, and that such a review must include consideration of the cumulative impacts of the full project which would include future phases of road connections through the Northwest Territories and likely developments and increased human activities on the landscape as a result of this project.
- Requested a realistic assessment of the long-term recovery or survival of the Bathurst Herd and adjacent herds if this project is implemented.
- Noted that Indigenous Governments/Organizations and communities who are potentially impacted must receive sufficient funding to properly assess the potential long-term, intergenerational impacts of this project on all aspects of health, food sovereignty, culture, safety, and community social, economic, spiritual, and cultural well-being for current and future generations.
- Expressed serious concerns about the potential impact to the Bathurst Caribou Herd, potential impacts to adjacent herds such as the Beverly/Ahiak Herd, and the potential serious and permanent negative impacts to all the communities who depend on these herds and live in relationship with the herds.
 - Athabasca Dene have serious concerns about such a permanent and significant linear structure being placed through such a sacred and critical habitat, and potentially disrupting movements between habitats at times when caribou are most sensitive during post-calving.

- This proposed all-season road has the potential to completely change access to barren-ground caribou for illegal harvest and potential over-harvest; roads bring disturbance in the form of human activity, noise, dust, invasive species, changes in predator-prey dynamics and inter-species competition and relationships, and new land uses, the cumulative impacts of which all have the potential to negatively.
- Cumulative effects must consider the long-term cumulative impacts of this project and future road connections. The vulnerability and sensitivity of this landscape and barren-ground caribou herds to climate change must be part of the analysis.

The NIRB received comments from community members on November 22, 2024, and comments are summarized as follows:

- Do not support the project as it would damage the environment and communities
- Important to maintain the land and animals as Inuk live and feed off the nature land as fishers and hunters who harvest for country food with the seasons
- Instead of building a road use the money for food security and housing in Nunavut
- Concerned about the negative impacts from littering, accidents (including intoxicated drivers), and sick caribou
- Potential negatives of the project including the destruction to the wildlife including pollution, accidents, leaks
- Impact of easy access to the city or southern Canada which could cause human trafficking, increased alcohol and drugs in communities/effects on the younger generations
- Lots of gravel from billions of homes from the smallest insects to the largest Polar bear.
- Concerned with how long it will take for environment to repair itself after the damage

7. Proponent's Response to Public Comments and Concerns

The following is a summary of the Proponent's response to concerns as received on November 15, 2024:

- Regarding the Inuvialuit Game Council's concern of a staging area in Tuktoyaktuk, the Proponent stated that no staging areas are proposed for construction or operations at that location.
- In response to the Government of the Northwest Territories concern regarding icebreaking, noted although this project proposal includes maintaining and operating the Port year-round, the Port would only receive vessels during the open water season. The Proponent stated that vessels operating outside of the normal open water season, such as the Canadian Coast Guard, would be required to seek independent approval for their operations outside of the Scope of this project proposal.
- The Proponent clarified that specially outfitted fuel barges frozen in Grays Bay are only anticipated to be required for construction, with permanent fuel storage and distribution facilities on land being used to support operations.
 - Further, the Proponent indicated that if fuel barges are required to be frozen in following the construction phase, appropriate protective measures would be taken.
- In response to an inquiry regarding the use of explosives, the Proponent stated that explosives would be used during operations at permanent quarries. Explosives for use by

both WKR and third-party users would be stored in the area noted in Figure 2.1³ as “Explosive Storage” and not within the area set aside for 3rd party operations.

- In response to an inquiry regarding the ice road on Contwoyto Lake from Jericho Mine to the Nunavut border, the Proponent noted that they plan to connect the Project with the Nunavut/NWT border using previously constructed winter road routes.
 - If third parties are actively constructing and operating the ice road from to Lupin during Grays Bay construction and operations, the Proponent would seek to work with those third parties to share this infrastructure. If no third parties are actively using this infrastructure, the Proponent would construct and operate this infrastructure itself.
- The Proponent clarified that they would consider re-using any infrastructure that remains at the Jericho mine, should it be suitable and available on mutually agreeable terms with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, the current manager of the Jericho site. No such additional infrastructure has been identified that meets these criteria at this time.

8. Proponent’s Commitments

The NIRB notes that the Proponent has committed to the following within the various documents that comprise this project proposal:

- Conducting and continuing a meaningful, respectful, and appropriate engagement program which would include engaging with:
 - Inuit and Indigenous Governments;
 - Indigenous Organizations such as the Kitikmeot Inuit Association;
 - Federal and territorial governments;
 - Institution of Public Government;
 - Hunters and Trappers Organizations;
 - Affected communities in the Kitikmeot and Northwest Territories; and
 - Other potentially affected parties in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.
- Consider and appropriately address issues, concerns, and interests arising from engagement with parties and the public during the environmental assessment process.
- Hold mitigation workshops with Inuit, government, Institutes of Public Governments and other stakeholders.
- Provide regular updates regarding the progress of the Project to organizations and stakeholders.
- Implementing the Project through meaningful Inuit decision-making regarding use, management, and conservation of land, water, and resources.
- Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit and Indigenous Knowledge would be collected, evaluated, and used during all phases of the project including informing the environmental assessment, design, operations, and mitigation and monitoring plans.
- Using best evidence to identify successful mitigation and adaptive management to assess effects on caribou behaviour, migration routes, calving and post-calving habitat.

- Access and use of the road would be managed to reduce effects on wildlife, especially caribou.
- A discussion of considerations of routing and design would be presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
- Final design and siting of facilities would be informed by the environmental assessment process, site conditions, Inuit Knowledge, and further engagement with interested parties.
- Access to port and road facilities would be controlled, with no intention for uncontrolled access.
- Development of various project-specific plans, including:
 - Road Management Plan to include procedures for road access and use, monitoring and mitigation measures, with a focus on caribou. The Road Management Plan would be developed with input for users, regulators, and Inuit and Indigenous governments and organizations;
 - Port Operations Management Plan;
 - Waste Management Plan;
 - Air Quality and Emissions Management Plan;
 - Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Program;
 - Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan;
 - Quarry Management Plan;
 - Wastewater Management Plan;
 - Construction Management Plan;
 - Nearshore Construction Management Plan;
 - Road Construction Management Plan;
 - Heritage Resource Management Plan;
 - Explosives Management Plan; and
 - Spill Contingency Plan.
- Sections of the road would include design features where Inuit Knowledge and scientific data indicate the need to provide caribou crossings.
- All watercourse crossings would be designed to meet applicable requirements related to flow, fish passage, and fisheries protection.
- Mobile construction camps would be combined with other project components such as quarries to reduce the total project footprint.
- Use of rock with the potential for Acid Rock Drainage or Metal Leaching (ARD/ML) would be minimized, and mitigation plans developed. Best efforts would be made to not use quarries with ARD/ML potential.
- Quarries not needed for operations would be reclaimed as per regulatory requirements and based on input of Inuit landowners and other stakeholders.
- Blasting for quarries and rock cuts would consider sensitive periods for wildlife, fish, and birds in determining size and timing.
- The design of project facilities and equipment selection would incorporate mitigation measures to reduce emissions, including Greenhouse Gasses, where practicable. Alternative energy sources, and measures to control dust during construction and operations would be considered.
- Monitoring programs to identify erosion, terrain, or permafrost degradation would be developed.
- Consideration of monitoring programs for vegetation in reclaimed areas.

- Monitoring needs for fish, fish habitat, and marine mammals would be developed.
- Marine Mammal Observers would be used during construction.
- Implementation of policies and initiatives for local employment and training, and local business development, procurement and contracting.
- Communication with government departments and other agencies responsible for community services and infrastructure to inform them of project plans.
- Reasonably foreseeable projects may be included in the assessment if sufficient information is available.

9. Time of Report Extension

Additional time was required to complete the screening to ensure parties could fully review the application; therefore on October 21, 2024 the NIRB provided notice to the responsible Minister, the Minister of Northern Affairs, Government of Canada, as required by Article 12, Section 12.4.5 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 92(3) of the *NuPPAA* seeking an extension to the 45-day timeline for the provision of the Board’s Report.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF *NuPPAA*

To determine whether a review of the Grays Bay Road and Port was required, the Board considered whether the project proposal had potential to result in significant ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts.

The Board considered the factors listed in s. 90 of *NuPPAA* to evaluate the potential significance of the impacts. The Board also considered the application materials and supplemental information provided by the Proponent, the comment submissions of parties, and took particular care to take into account Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, Indigenous and community knowledge shared with the Board, to complete its assessment and determination of the significance of impacts.

The following is a summary of the Board’s assessment of the factors that are relevant to the determination of significant impacts with respect of this project proposal:

1. *The size of the geographic area, including the size of wildlife habitats, likely to be affected by the impacts.*

The proposed Project would start at Grays Bay on Coronation Gulf and create permanent infrastructure which extends south approximately 230 kilometres (km) to the Jericho Mine Site near Contwoyto Lake and continue another 60 km to the NWT/Nunavut border connected by a section of seasonal ice road. The proposed corridor in which the road, port, and associated infrastructure would be built would be approximately two (2) km wide, giving a total project development area of approximately 660 square kilometres (km²). There would be approximately 230 water crossings along the proposed route, of which 18 would require a span of more than five (5) meters, and 50 crossings of 1.5 to five (5) meters with numerous smaller culverts. The proposed Project would be located on both Inuit Owned Land parcels and Crown lands.

In addition to these areas, the geographic area likely affected by impacts would also include zones of influence around the project activities and components, as well as within a regional setting. The Project would cross the calving/post-calving grounds of the Bathurst caribou herd and the northern end of the road, and the Grays Bay Port and much of the northern section of road would occur within the range of the Dolphin Union herd. The Proponent and mapping sources identify that the proposed activities may take place within habitats for many local and far-ranging wildlife species such as muskox, wolves, migratory birds, non-migratory birds, fish, and Species at Risk such as the Eskimo curlew, and the Project may also potentially affect migratory patterns.

2. *The ecosystemic sensitivity of that area.*

The proposed project would occur in an area with no formal designation for wildlife protection or identified ecosystemic sensitivity in Nunavut. However, any ships that travel the Northwest Passage along the Inuvialuit coast would bypass Tarium Niryutait Marine Protected Area and Anguniaqvia Niqiqyuam Marine Protected Areas Parties have also noted that important wildlife occur within the spatial and temporal boundaries of the proposed project with core caribou habitat (calving and post-calving grounds) delineated and shown to be used annually by barren ground caribou (Bathurst and Dolphin Union herds). Important wildlife habitats identified within, or adjacent to, the proposed project area have been identified for:

- Caribou habitats and migration routes (summer and winter ranges);
- Muskox;
- Grizzly bears;
- Wolves;
- Arctic fox;
- Moose;
- Migratory birds including geese, tundra swan, ptarmigan, short eared owl, peregrine falcon, rough legged hawk, Gyr falcon and golden and bald eagles; and
- Non-migratory birds.

3. *The historical, cultural and archaeological significance of that area.*

There are known sites of historical, cultural, and archaeological significance identified by the Proponent which are associated with the proposed project area and are likely to be affected by the Project, with a reasonable potential for the presence of currently undocumented sites. The Proponent has committed to undertaking an archeological survey of the proposed project area and to having a certified archaeologist on site to supervise construction when near identified heritage resources.

During the commenting period, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Government of Northwest Territories, Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resource Board, Tł̥chq̣ Government noted that the Project could affect traditional land use in the area, and the Athabasca Denesūliné NÉNé Land Corporation discussed impacts on all aspects of health, food sovereignty culture, safety, and community social, economic, spiritual, and cultural well-being for current and future generations.

This area has also been identified as having value and priority to the local communities for:

- Harvesting of various wildlife species including caribou, muskox, moose, grizzly bears, wolves, migratory birds, and fish and fish habitat;
- Important cultural and spiritual/sacred areas (trails, camps, cabins, caches, and graves); and
- Traditional camp areas and hunting and trapping grounds.

4. *The size of the human and the animal populations likely to be affected by the impacts.*

The proposed port would be approximately 180 km east of the hamlet of Kugluktuk, 290 km southwest of Cambridge Bay, 130 km west of Omingmaktok (Bay Chimo), and 170 km northwest of Kingaok (Bathurst Inlet), while the road corridor would be within 120 km west of Bathurst Inlet. The southern end of the road at Jericho Station would be within 60 km of the border of the Northwest Territories and the Proponent indicated that it would construct a winter road annually to connect Jericho Station to the Nunavut/Northwest Territories Border on the same routing as the Tibbitt-Contwoyto Winter Road included in the Lupin Mine Project. This would mean that a connection to Yellowknife and all-weather roads south, leading to transboundary impacts.

Due to the location of the proposed project and generally minimal current land use by Kitikmeot population in the West Kitikmeot interior, direct impacts on human populations or activities may be impacted by the proposed project. Wildlife habitat (including caribou habitat), marine habitat, marine mammals, fish habitat (marine and freshwater), and bird nesting grounds identified within and adjacent to, the project area may be impacted by proposed construction activities of the port and road. The operation of a road and port could also contribute to increased noise causing wildlife disturbances in the area.

The location of the all-weather access road passes through the Bathurst herd calving and post calving areas and its location in relation to the herd's migratory route potentially impacts the majority of the current herd population. This potential impact on caribou in Nunavut could also lead to potential impacts on Indigenous harvesters in the Northwest Territories as stated in comments received from the Tłı̨ch̨ Government, Athabasca Denesųłiné NėNė Land Corporation, Wek'ėezhıı Renewable Resource Board, and the Inuvialuit Game Council.

5. *The nature, magnitude and complexity of the impacts; the probability of the impacts occurring; the frequency and duration of the impacts; and the reversibility or irreversibility of the impacts.*

As the Grays Bay Road and Port project proposes the construction and operation of a port, road, station, and an annual ice road, the nature of associated potential impacts are considered to be known and primarily associated with operation of the transportation components of the Project. The probability for the impacts to occur is considered to be high, particularly for potential impacts on caribou populations, while the frequency of impacts may be intermittent and ongoing for the life of the Project, which is essentially projected to be permanent with 75+ years of operation, there no plans for decommissioning the infrastructure. Residual impacts from the Project would therefore be considered long-term and/or permanent.

As noted by commenting parties such as Environment and Climate Change Canada and Natural Resources Canada, with due care and appropriate management, impacts to the biophysical environment could be reversible and mitigable. However, given that the stated objective of the Project is to establish a transportation corridor to encourage development of additional mineral projects within the West Kitikmeot Region, it is highly likely that the establishment of the Project would induce further developments. The resulting projects have the potential to exacerbate habitat fragmentation and contribute to other adverse ecosystemic impacts that exceed the potential magnitude and probability of adverse impacts associated with the Project when considered in isolation.

6. *The cumulative impacts that could result from the impacts of the project combined with those of any other project that has been carried out, is being carried out or is likely to be carried out.*

The Project would take place within a 100-km radius of several other projects that have been or are currently being assessed by the Board, listed in Table 1. The potential for cumulative impacts to terrestrial and marine wildlife, fish and fish habitat, migratory and non-migratory birds, water quality, air quality, heritage resources, terrestrial or marine wildlife harvesting, and other traditional activities resulting from the construction and operation of the road and port was considered in development of the NIRB's recommendation. Specifically, the potential for this proposed project to contribute to cumulative impacts on caribou and marine populations was cited within most parties' comment submissions and the NIRB has considered this issue in the development of the NIRB's recommendation.

The presence of the proposed port would not alter the shipping requirements for other projects such as the Hope Bay Project (NIRB File No. 05MN047) or the Back River Project (NIRB File No. 12MN036) as these projects would not necessarily access this infrastructure of this Project. Thus, there is potential for cumulative impacts with other active mining projects that involve shipping. In addition, other shipping activities in the region such as community resupply, cruise tourism, research, etc. would also contribute to potential for cumulative impacts.

The winter connection to the Tibbitt-Contwoyto Winter Road at the Nunavut/Northwest Territories Border could also result in additional increased marine activity due to supplies for the diamond mines in the Northwest Territories being sealifted into Grays Bay and transported southward in the winter trucking season as opposed to be transported northward from Yellowknife. The extension of the winter road from the diamond mines in the Northwest Territories to the border allowing the transport of supplies into Nunavut has not happened often in recent years was also considered by the Board.

Further, it has also been identified that this project proposal could potentially induce additional exploration, mining, and transportation infrastructure in adjacent areas within the Kitikmeot and Northwest Territories.

Table 1: Project List

| NIRB # | Project Title | Project type |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Proposed Developments – undergoing Assessment</i> | | |
| 24EN047 | Rae Copper Exploration Port | Exploration |
| <i>Active Projects</i> | | |
| 12MN036 | Back River Project Energy Center | Mine |
| 12MN043 | Izok Corridor Project | Mine |
| 16UN058 | Jericho Site Stabilization | Care and Maintenance |
| 17YN061 | Kitikmeot Region Marine Science Study | Research (ongoing) |
| 17EN059 | Arcadia Bay Project | Mineral Exploration |
| 24YN049 | Research Program for the Grays Bay Road and Port | Research (to inform this proposal) |
| <i>Past Projects</i> | | |
| 99WR053 | Lupin Mine | Care and Maintenance |
| 00MN059 | Jericho Diamond Mine Project | Care and Maintenance |
| 06EN066 | Izok and Hood Project | Exploration |
| 08EN067 | High Lake East | Exploration |
| 14YN001 | CROW - Canadian Ranger Ocean Watch | Research |
| 17AN031 | Canada C3 led by Students on Ice Foundation | Research/Tourism |
| 17YN041 | A Coastal, Pan-Canadian Collection of plants, microalgae and marine invertebrates for the Canadian Museum of Nature... | Research |
| 19EA019 | Blue Star Corp. | Exploration |
| 20EN001 | Ulu Gold Project | Exploration |
| 21EN013 | Pistol Lake Project | Exploration |
| 22EN057 | South Kitikmeot Gold Project | Exploration |
| 23EN001 | The Muskox Nickel Property | Exploration |
| 24EN073 | Epworth | Exploration |

7. Any other factor that the Board considers relevant to the assessment of the significance of impacts.

The Proponent has indicated the Project has the potential to improve the economic status of the Kitikmeot region (and thus Nunavut overall) by lowering transportation costs for community resupply of fuel and materials as well as by potentially improving the feasibility of other developments by lowering transportation and supply costs. However, these assumptions, and the basis for them, remain to be tested by further assessment. Without additional information, reviewing parties and the Board could not accept or reject these conclusions, and note only the potential for these types of significant positive project-induced impacts. The Board also notes that additional factors external to the Project, such as proponents within the Northwest Territories constructing an all-weather road northward to meet the proposed road and providing an all-year connection between Nunavut, Yellowknife, and southern Canada could also potentially further improve the shipping and supply economics associated with the Project (such as the proposed Slave Geological Province Corridor Project).

The current project proposal incorporates utilization of land adjacent to the existing Jericho mine infrastructure. The Proponent indicated that existing infrastructure may be used if it is suitable and available on mutually agreeable terms with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, the current manager of the Jericho site. However, no such additional infrastructure was identified that meets these criteria at this time. If such infrastructure is identified in the future, coordination between the Proponent and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, would be necessary and the NIRB would be involved in discussions regarding monitoring or reclamation of existing infrastructure with either Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and/or the Kitikmeot Inuit Association.

Further, the Board notes the association of the current proposed project with the Izok Corridor Project, currently under Review (NIRB File No. 12MN043). Specifically, the Grays Bay port infrastructure and the road corridor infrastructure as proposed for this project is also part of the scope for the Izok Corridor Project and this overlap would require clarification from the project proponents regarding which proposal will include the full scope of the activities, works and undertakings included within the current version of the Grays Bay Road and Port project proposal.

VIEWS OF THE BOARD

In considering the factors as set out above in the screening of this project proposal, the Board has identified a number of issues and provides the following views regarding whether or not the proposed project has the potential to result in significant impacts.

Ecosystem, wildlife habitat and Inuit harvesting activities:

Issue 1: Potential adverse impacts to caribou and caribou habitat (Bathurst and Dolphin Union herds along with Ahiak, Beverly, and Bluenose-east), other wildlife including marine mammals, terrestrial wildlife habitat, and migratory and non-migratory birds and their habitat from road construction and associated infrastructure development, road operation, transportation of personnel and equipment to the different sites, and the construction and operation of the port and small craft harbour.

Board views: As discussed above in the assessment of factors relevant to this project proposal, the Board agrees that there is potential for impacts within the footprint of a 660 km² road and port, and facilities in addition to zones of influence surrounding areas of project activities and components. The proposed timing of the potential impacts is considered to be intermittent during periods of construction and continuous during periods of operation. Operations are expected to continue for more than 75 years. The Proponent stated that monitoring data and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit identified that the project spatially and temporally overlaps the range of both the Bathurst and Dolphin Union caribou herds, including sensitive habitats such as calving and post-calving grounds and migratory routes of the Bathurst herd. The primary impacts of the proposed project on wildlife and migratory birds could occur due to the loss of habitat resulting from disturbance. Bird nesting habitat may be lost, while denning sites may be lost due to the use of eskers to

build the road. In addition, dust deposition from construction and operation activities may increase the footprint of the disturbed area or avoided area by wildlife and/or birds.

In its submission, the Proponent noted that the area contained caribou, muskox, grizzly bears, wolverines, wolves, moose, red and Arctic foxes, raptors, waterbirds, upland breeding birds, associated nesting grounds for migratory birds and raptors, and small mammals. The Proponent has noted that the project would have direct impacts on terrestrial wildlife and the overall impact of the proposed project on wildlife habitat would require an in-depth review. KIA, DFO, ECCC, and CIRNAC indicated that the potential for impacts on migratory birds and Species at Risk potentially encountered in the project area would require further technical review to reduce the potential for, and magnitude of, negative impacts. The IGC also noted marine issues like sea ice habitat for ringed seals, bearded seals and walrus as well as impacts to beluga, bowhead, Arctic char and Arctic cod.

Indirect habitat loss due to sensory disturbance (such as noise and movement) would be expected to extend beyond the project footprint and have adverse impacts at the regional level both in terrestrial and marine environments. The impact of indirect habitat loss from sensory disturbance to caribou is considered moderate by the Proponent, but several commenting parties including the KIA, GN, GNWT, BQCMB, Kugluktuk HTO, Inuvialuit Game Council, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resource Board, Caribou Guardians Coalition, Tłı̄chǫ Government (Tłı̄chǫ), and ADNLC, expressed concerns about all types of direct and indirect disturbances to caribou, and may not agree that impacts on caribou would be moderate.

Direct habitat loss to caribou due to the proposed infrastructure development is, in reference to the overall size of caribou habitat, considered by the Proponent to be minor. However, the nature of the proposed project as a transportation corridor passing through calving and post-calving ground and caribou migration routes would have the potential to result in significant levels of habitat fragmentation and migratory disruption, which could exacerbate direct habitat loss.

In addition, the proposed activities may have the potential to contribute to cumulative impacts when combined with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable project-impacts on caribou and caribou habitat, as noted by several commenting parties⁴. Recognizing that the proposed project could induce additional exploration and mineral development activities in the region, the potential for further additive cumulative impacts on terrestrial wildlife generally and caribou in particular warrants further consideration. In addition, as previously discussed, residual impacts, and cumulative impacts from the proposed project on wildlife, migratory and non-migratory birds and their respective habitats, could in-turn impact traditional land use activities, Inuit harvesting, and the overall environmental integrity of the area.

⁴ For example see comments submitted by Kugluktuk HTO, Caribou Guardians Coalition and Tłı̄chǫ Government.

Comments received from KIA, GNWT, BQCMB, Kugluktuk HTO, WRRB, Caribou Guardians Coalition, and ADNLC indicated concern that the presence of a road would have greater impact due to allowing increased access to hunters into core caribou habitat.

Commenting parties also specifically noted that caribou use this area to migrate through to core calving and post-calving habitat and expressed concern regarding the potential for the Project to affect migration routes as a result.

Noted Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous or Community Knowledge: The Proponent noted that project specific studies to collect Inuit Knowledge were previously carried out by MMG for the Izok Corridor Project and by KIA and the GN for the 2017 Grays Bay Road and Port proposal. Additionally, the Proponent noted that KIA maintains the Naonnaiyaotit Traditional Knowledge Project which maintains a database of knowledge shared in relation to wildlife, including caribou. The Proponent has committed to use Inuit, and Indigenous Knowledge in all phases of the project. Several commenting parties discussed traditional knowledge including the Kugluktuk HTO, Inuvialuit Game Council, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resource Board, Caribou Guardians Coalition, Tłı̄chǝ Government (Tłı̄chǝ), and ADNLC.

Board Recommendation: As the potential for impact from the Project could be significant for caribou, birds, marine mammals, and other wildlife, their habitat, and could have impacts on the calving grounds and migration routes of the Bathurst caribou herd, it is recommended that an in-depth review is required to fully assess the impacts of the proposed project on wildlife and wildlife habitat with emphasis on caribou and caribou habitat and marine mammals. The Board also notes that more in-depth consideration is required with respect to the potential for impacts on caribou to result in adverse impacts to wildlife harvesting activities, traditional land use and the availability and safety of country food for Inuit and Indigenous groups in the area.

Issue 2: Potential adverse impacts to the freshwater aquatic environment including surface water quality and quantity, freshwater fish and fish habitat, and other aquatic organisms because of the construction of the road, water-crossings, quarrying activities, storage and use of fuel, chemicals and explosives, the operations of the road and associated infrastructure, and transportation activities.

Board views: The proposed road would include up to 230 drainage areas which would require approximately 18 single or multi-span bridges, up to 50 culverts of diameters between 1.5 metres (m) and 5 m; and numerous smaller culverts. The timing of the proposed activities and their associated potential impacts is intermittent during periods of construction, and continuous during periods of operation, which is projected to exceed 75 years. The primary impacts of the Project on the freshwater aquatic environment could occur as a result of the loss of fish habitat associated with the construction and operation of 230 water crossings along the road. In the comment submissions from KIA, CIRNAC, DFO, ECCC, and Inuvialuit Game Council, concerns were identified about the potential for the project proposal to have impacts on the aquatic environment including fish and fish habitat, surface water quality and quantity.

The Proponent has indicated in its submission that most waterbodies crossings for the road corridor are rated as having no to poor fisheries value due to their ephemeral or intermittent nature; however, permanent streams and rivers may have fish habitat, and the Proponent also noted that disturbance due to construction or operations may impact existing or potential fisheries downstream. The Proponent seeks to develop and implement measures to minimize the potential impacts on wildlife, the Proponent will use best practices in monitoring and management plans to reduce harm to marine mammals and fish.

In addition, as previously discussed, residual impacts, and cumulative impacts, from the Project on fish and fish habitat, could in turn impact traditional land use activities, Inuit harvesting, and the overall environmental integrity of the area.

Board Recommendation: It is recommended that a full impact assessment is required to adequately assess the potential for the Project to have significant adverse impacts on surface water quality and quantity, freshwater fish and fish habitat, and other aquatic organisms.

Issue 3: Potential adverse impacts to the marine environment including water quality, marine mammals, marine fish and fish habitat, and other aquatic organisms as a result of the construction of the port, quarrying activities in the area, storage and use of fuel, chemicals and explosives, during the operation of the port impacts associated infrastructure, and transportation activities such as offloading of fuel and supplies, maintenance, and local community use of the small craft harbour.

Board views: The proposed port would include docks for ore transport, ramp for sealift, and a small craft harbour. Port operations would take place during the open water season from July to October. The impacts of the Project on the aquatic environment would result from the loss of fish habitat, increased marine traffic, potential fuel spills, contamination, noise and dust associated with the construction and operation of docks and ramps at the port and vessel operations.

The Proponent noted that five (5) species of marine mammals are known to occur in or near Grays Bay: ringed seal, beluga, narwhal, bowhead whale, and Polar bear. The Proponent went on to note that ringed seals are by far the most common species while the remaining species are only seasonally or intermittently present.

In addition, as previously discussed, residual impacts, and cumulative impacts, from the Project on fish and fish habitat, could in turn impact traditional land and marine use activities, Inuit harvesting, and the overall environmental integrity of the area.

Noted Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous or Community Knowledge: The Proponent stated that consultation with Elders indicated that coastal areas are important for Polar bear denning. The GNWT also noted that ice breaking and additional traffic may be an issue for the Dolphin/Union Caribou herd across Coronation Gulf.

Board Recommendation: It is recommended that a full impact review and in-depth assessment is required to adequately assess the potential for the Project to have significant adverse impacts on marine water quality, marine mammals, fish and fish habitat, and other marine aquatic organisms.

Issue 4: Potential adverse impacts to vegetation, soil, permafrost, and terrain due to the development and operations of the all-weather road and port, development of camp facilities and associated infrastructure, both temporary and permanent, storage and use of fuel, chemicals and explosives, dust generation, and quarrying activities.

Board views: These types of potential adverse impacts may occur within the spatial boundaries of proposed road transportation corridor, port, camps, quarries, and associated infrastructure. The primary impacts of the proposed project on vegetation, soil, and terrain would be from quarrying activities, the construction of the road and port facilities, and associated dust from operations. Loss of vegetation is considered permanent in nature, while impacts to soil are considered permanent due to erosion potentially occurring during the construction phase and possible impacts to permafrost due to operations. Further, the Board has identified that there is high potential for impacts to contribute cumulatively to possible existing soil and water contamination in the area from ongoing road and port operations. In addition, dust deposition from construction and operation activities have the potential to increase the footprint of the impacted area.

Board Recommendation: It is recommended that a full impact review and in-depth assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed project is required to determine the potential for the Project to have adverse impacts on vegetation, soil and terrain.

Issue 5: Potential adverse impacts to air quality could result from project activities, including dust and emissions generated using explosives to blast rock, dust from the use of heavy equipment for site preparation, road construction, and development of the port and associated infrastructure, as well as the maintenance of the port and road during operations on a year-round basis.

Board views: As noted above, there is potential for impacts within the spatial boundaries of the proposed road transportation corridor, port, camps (temporary and permanent), quarries and associated infrastructure. There is potential for adverse impacts to air quality from site preparation, use of heavy equipment and machinery (terrestrial and marine), and blasting with the project, which would be limited to within the project footprint with a low probability of extending beyond the geographic area. Dust deposition from construction and operation activities may increase the footprint of the impacted area.

The Proponent indicated that a Road Management Plan would be developed to include dust mitigation measures, as well as an Air Quality Management Plan would be developed and implemented for construction and operations.

Board Recommendation: It is recommended that a full impact review and in-depth assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed project is required to determine the potential adverse impacts on air quality.

Issue 6: Potential negative impacts on Inuit and other Indigenous terrestrial and marine harvesting activities due to impacts on caribou herd populations, marine mammal populations and associated changes in migratory patterns as well as local fish populations. Further, potential impacts may result due to changes in Inuit terrestrial and marine use through the use of proposed project.

Board Views: The proposed project would involve a small craft harbour and providing facilities along the shore of Coronation Gulf where none currently exist, which may allow for increased use of that area by local people boating to the port and using it as a base for other activities along the coast and inland. The existence of a road would allow access in the summer to the interior of the West Kitikmeot via all-terrain vehicle transported to the port via boat, whereas current access to the interior by land is limited to snowmobile during the winter months or to areas where ATVs may be transported by aircraft, limiting the potential use of that area for traditional, harvesting, or cultural activities.

The Board notes that harvesting activities and general land use that currently occurs throughout the project area is on a limited scale at present. However, if the project proposal were to proceed, this land use would change by increasing access, increasing feasibility for establishment of outfitting camps, etc. which could lead to increased harvesting by Inuit and other groups into the interior of the mainland. Increased access to the interior would provide Inuit with greater opportunities for traditional land use.

As discussed in previous sections, concerns were noted by commenting parties regarding the potential impact to caribou numbers due to development in calving and post-calving grounds. It was noted by BQCMB, WRRB, CGC, Tłıchǵ Government, and ADNLC that an all-season road to the interior of the West Kitikmeot could increase hunting pressure on the Bathurst Herd by providing easier access for hunting. The road may also potentially cause a change in caribou migratory patterns which could result in changes to traditional hunting areas used for traditional harvest activities.

Noted Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous or Community Knowledge: The Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Association, Inuvialuit Game Council, ADNLC, Tłıchǵ Government, and WRRB, noted the cultural importance of caribou on Inuit and other Indigenous peoples' traditional lifestyles, including subsistence harvesting. Concerns were expressed that the road could present a barrier to caribou migration at a regional scale, which in turn could impact traditional activities. It was also noted by CIRNAC that the proposal could cause significant adverse impacts to Inuit harvest activities while ECCC noted that contaminants may impact water quality of fish bearing waterbodies.

Board Recommendation: It is recognized that this proposed major development project may alter Inuit land use and the use of the land by other groups in the interior of the West Kitikmeot and along Coronation Gulf. It is recommended that a full impact review and in-depth

assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed project be required. The Board also notes that more in-depth consideration is required with respect to the potential for impacts on caribou to result in adverse impacts to wildlife harvesting activities, traditional land use and the availability and safety of country foods for the Inuit and Indigenous communities in the area.

Socio-economic effects on northerners:

Issue 7: Potential adverse impacts to historical, cultural, and archaeological sites in the proposed project area may result from project activities.

Board Views: The Proponent is proposing to work in areas of known historical and cultural significance. These sites were considered in Project planning, and the Proponent plans to conduct an archaeological survey and to develop appropriate mitigation measures when avoidance is impossible. The Proponent has committed to develop a plan to reduce impacts through site investigation and documentation. The Proponent would require approval from the Government of Nunavut – Department of Culture and Heritage prior to initiation of any activities.

Board Recommendation: The proposed Project may alter archaeological sites for which avoidance is not feasible, and the Proponent would be required to determine the extent of potential adverse impacts on historical, cultural and archaeological sites and mitigate such impacts. It is recommended that a full impact review and in-depth assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed project is required to fully assess the potential for, and mitigation of these types of impacts.

Issue 8: Potential socio-economic impacts associated with the economic benefits from the induced development of additional mineral projects and transportation infrastructure.

Board Views: The proposed Project could result in increased exploration and mining activities as well as improving the economic feasibility of known mineral deposits, increasing opportunities for local and Inuit training, employment, and contracting. The existence of a port and road with connection to the south provides the possibility of allowing for direct shipment of material from the south and staging at the port for earlier sealift to communities in the open water season, decreasing costs for residents of the Kitikmeot and allowing construction in communities to begin earlier than allowed with the current fall sealift schedule. The Proponent stated that the Project would create jobs for Inuit, other Nunavummiut, and Northern residents.

Noted Inuit Qaujimaningit, Indigenous or Community Knowledge: The Kugluktuk HTO noted that the project has potential negative impacts on the caribou in the surrounding areas and does not support the project. The HTO also stated that there were not enough people to fill the existing positions in the Region and were concerned that this lack of capacity would prevent communities from benefitting from the project proceeding. The Public also commented on the potential negative impacts that may occur with the more established access to larger centres like Yellowknife and the rest of Canada.

Board Recommendation: It is recognized that this proposed major development project which may offer opportunities for significant economic benefits to accrue to the Kitikmeot region. The potential negative impact to traditional lifestyle and culture for all impacted parties is also under consideration and would need to be assessed. It is recommended that a full impact review and in-depth assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed project be required to adequately assess the nature and extent of these impacts.

Significant public concern:

Issue 9: The project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern.

Board Views: The proposed Project would occur in habitat considered critical for the health of caribou, specifically the Bathurst herd, and this concern was raised by the GNWT, WRRB, Thcho Government, BQCMB, Caribou Guardians Coalition, Kugluktuk HTO, KIA, and community members in the comments submitted, and by the Proponent in its application, identifying the existing level of public concern. It will be important for the Proponent to demonstrate to the affected communities and the public generally that project components have been adequately evaluated and appropriately mitigated.

Board Recommendation: The proposed project has the potential to cause significant adverse impacts on the ecosystem and may be a cause of significant public concern. It is recommended that the magnitude of concern be clarified and addressed through further opportunities for the affected communities and public to provide comment on the proposed project during a full impact review process.

Technological innovations for which the effects are unknown:

Issue 10: While the proposed project would utilize technologies which have been demonstrated to be effective in an arctic environment, as noted by commenters, road and other infrastructure proposals in the North can require customized techniques, procedures and technologies to address variable climatic conditions and unique operating environments.

Board Views: Road and port infrastructure development is generally well-understood technology, however the long distances involved and the rapidly changing Arctic conditions (e.g., the impacts of climate change on permafrost conditions) may make it difficult to predict impacts with a high degree of certainty.

Board Recommendation: It is recommended that a full impact review and in-depth assessment is required to ensure mitigation techniques and the technology chosen are appropriate, adequately reflect, and can be adapted to, rapidly changing Arctic conditions and would effectively limit the potential for adverse impacts resulting from the proposed Project should it be approved to proceed. In the Board's opinion, an in-depth assessment is required to ensure that proposed mitigation measures and technology reflect the experience gained during the operation of other ports and all-weather Arctic roads (such as those in use at existing mines), recent data from project and regional monitoring programs and the most up to date knowledge of the impacts of existing mitigation measures, cumulative impacts and the impacts of climate change in the Arctic.

As indicated in the previous section, the Board accepts that the commenting parties have identified the key issues and concerns about the potential for significant adverse impacts associated with the type of project development proposed in the Grays Bay Road and Port Proposal, as set out in Article 12, Section 12.4.4(b) of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 92(2)(b) of *NuPPAA*. The Board also highlights the importance of the Proponent working with the potentially affected Kitikmeot and Northwest Territories communities to support their understanding of the activities, undertakings and infrastructure being proposed, and the potential for the Proposal to have significant positive and negative impacts. The NIRB further notes that the commenting parties and the Board have identified several concerns and outstanding questions regarding the Proposal including requiring more information regarding the refined scale and scope of the Proposal. The Board expects the Proponent to provide these details as the review of the Proposal proceeds.

1. Potential Cumulative Impacts of Increasing Mineral Development in the Kitikmeot Region

Many of the Board's concerns initially discussed in 2017 continue to be of concern in 2024, including the potential for the proposed project to result in adverse ecosystemic and socio-economic impacts because of the combined cumulative impacts of the Project. Additionally, the potential for positive and negative effects linked to the increased levels of mineral development in the Kitikmeot Region likely to be associated with the Project requires further analysis and should be considered during the review of the project proposal as described below.

The NIRB is aware of a significant number of mineral exploration and development projects within the Kitikmeot Region which have operated in the past, are currently operating, or are proposed to operate in the future. A search of the Board's online Public Registry at www.nirb.ca yields more than 100 assessments for such projects.

Most of the current exploration programs and potential future programs in the Kitikmeot Region provide some employment and/or business opportunities to residents of the region and include activities such as transportation by air, road or winter trails, helicopter-assisted surveying and diamond drilling, water withdrawal, bulk fuel storage, and operation of camps and other supporting infrastructure. All commenting parties identified the potential for cumulative impacts as a concern and the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Association noted that there is no capacity to fill currently available jobs at the existing mines and exploration projects. The consideration of cumulative impacts is particularly important in a project such as this where the need for, and stated purpose of the Project, is to encourage other projects to be developed. As such, the Board continues to recognize that the analysis of potential impacts from development arising because of the proposed Grays Bay Road and Port must thoroughly consider the potential for cumulative impacts to occur from Project impacts acting in concert with impacts from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects.

It is also the view of the Board that the potential for adverse cumulative ecosystemic and socio-economic impacts must factor prominently into the assessment of the Grays Bay Road and Port given the importance of wildlife habitat (e.g., caribou calving, post-calving, and ice crossing

habitat), Inuit harvesting in the region, Inuit and Indigenous dependence on the same caribou herds that travel through both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, the potential transboundary impacts, the continued encroachment of development into previously undisturbed areas throughout the region, and the impacts of the increased connections to Yellowknife and the rest of Canada. As the Proponent's intentions are to improve supply transport in the region from the proposed all-weather connection to the south and to utilize the proposed road and port to encourage mineral exploration, these potential indirect impacts require consideration during the assessment of the Project, as well as the associated implications on further development in the West Kitikmeot Region.

The Board reiterates that the potential development of future mining projects in the region *in general* cannot be predicted with certainty and therefore potential cumulative impacts would be at best theoretical, the proposed road routing passes through or is adjacent to known deposits at High Lake (base metals), Ulu (gold), and Jericho (diamonds), while the Izok deposit (base metals) would be approximately 100 kilometers from the proposed Jericho Station. The deposits at High Lake and Izok require moving large quantities of concentrate to tidewater and each of these deposits, individually and in combination, were the subject of prior development proposals that were eventually deemed uneconomic due to the high cost of developing the projects in conjunction with constructing the roads and ports necessary to move the product. The Ulu deposit has been the site of advanced exploration but has not received a positive feasibility study as a standalone project.⁵

The presence of road and port facilities (as well as the shortened road needed to be built for Izok) could improve the economics of these proposed projects to the point where they could be more likely to move forward, and therefore their potential cumulative impacts would need to be taken into account. Additionally, the presence of the road could conceivably revive interest in the Jericho mine and surrounding area, which has indicated potential for further diamondiferous kimberlite discoveries.

2. Other Transportation Infrastructure Projects

Since 2017, there were no changes to major development projects under Review by the NIRB and therefore the list of proposed projects that overlap other proposed developments, with the potential to confuse or complicate the assessment of the Grays Bay Road and Port Project have not changed. The proposed Bathurst Inlet Port and Road (BIPR) Project (NIRB File No. 03UN114) would theoretically intersect the Project near the former Jericho diamond mine, with the objective of also providing access to the interior of the West Kitikmeot and Contwoyto Lake for potential mineral development projects, similar to the Grays Bay Road and Port proposal. The Izok Corridor Project (NIRB File No. 12MN043) includes development of essentially identical main road and port infrastructure, the major significant difference being the extension of the road from the area of the former Jericho diamond mine to MMG's Izok Lake property.

⁵ *Technical Report on the Ulu Gold Property*, prepared for WPC Resources Inc., July 2015, https://www.wpcresources.ca/site/assets/files/1328/technical_report_on_the_ulu_property.pdf

As noted in 2017, the Board reiterates that given the nature of the proposals, clarification may be necessary from the respective project proponents regarding implications to the feasibility of their proposals, should the Grays Bay Road and Port Project be approved to proceed.

3. Impacts of Increased Shipping in the Kitikmeot Region

While not directly associated with the infrastructure of the proposed Project, shipping to the proposed port would occur in concert with other existing shipping operations for the Doris North Gold Mine (NIRB File No. 05MN047) and Phase 2 Hope Bay Belt (NIRB File No. 12MN001), the Back River Project (NIRB File No. 12MN036), annual resupply to communities in the Kitikmeot Region, and existing traffic through the Northwest Passage. If approved to proceed, the Grays Bay Road and Port project would contribute significantly to the increasing frequency and amounts of goods and fuel being shipped within the Kitikmeot Region; measures for accident prevention, spill response capabilities, and the impacts of climate change on the open water shipping season within the Kitikmeot Region will warrant special consideration during the Review of the Project.

4. Impacts on the Bathurst Caribou Herd

It was observed in both the 2017 screening and the current assessment that both the Dolphin Union and Bathurst herds are present in the proposed project area, and multiple parties raised concerns regarding the proposed project's location at least partly within the calving and post-calving areas of the Bathurst herd, as well as its location along the migratory route of the Dolphin and Union herds between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) also noted that the all-season access road may have impacts on the Ahiak and Bluenose-East herds and potential impacts through habitat fragmentation and degradation.

The Government of the Northwest Territories also observed that increase in shipping traffic, including icebreaking could have an impact on migration of the Dolphin and Union herd across the Coronation Gulf. The herd is already seeing impacts of poor ice formation from climate change and increased marine traffic and the crossing and from both a scientific and Inuit Knowledge perspective is considered sensitive habitat for the herd.

Assessments of projects in the region—Doris North (05MN047 and 12MN001) and Back River (12MN036)—have demonstrated that potential adverse impact on caribou and caribou habitat is a matter of significant interest and concern among members of the public, Inuit, other Indigenous groups, and other stakeholders, as have the comments received by the NIRB in response to this project proposal. Given the significant size and location of the proposed project, an in-depth assessment of this particular project and its potential for inducing further development projects is necessary.

Additionally, the Caribou Guardians Coalition, Tłı̄chǫ, and Wek'èezhì Renewable Resource Board, and the BQCMB observed that along the Tibbitt to Contwoyto Winter Road there are impacts with increased human access to previously undisturbed areas which may have led to illegal

harvesting of the Bathurst herd and meat wastage on the Tibbit to Contwoyto Winter Road. It will be important for the Board to understand the requirements for road management to minimize the potential for these kinds of negative effects.

5. Transboundary Issues

The proposed project has the potential for adverse impacts on the Bathurst caribou herd and the Dolphin and Union herd which has the potential to affect important traditional harvest activities of communities in both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Consequently, as in previous NIRB reviews⁶ and as noted by most commenting parties, transboundary issues must be considered in the context of this review, as the potential for impacts on the Bathurst and Dolphin and Union caribou herds were identified as central concerns of the Government of the Northwest Territories as well as several nearby Indigenous communities in the Northwest Territories. The Athabasca Denesūliné NÉNé Land Corporation also highlighted the importance of a realistic assessment of the long-term recovery or survival of the Bathurst and Beverly/Ahiak herds and the serious and permanent negative impacts to all communities who depend on these herds and live in a relationship with the herds, as well as establishing infrastructure in sacred and critical habitat.

The connection of the proposed road to the Tibbett-Contwoyto Winter Road and the stated intent of the Proponent of connecting to an all-weather road coming from the south to the Nunavut border over the long term also raises further transboundary issues that should be assessed during the review of the Project. The existence of an all-weather road connecting tidewater to the diamond mines in the Northwest Territories and beyond to potential connections with the southern road system also likely warrants further assessment of both environmental and socio-economic transboundary impacts. The Board anticipates that further investigation of any planned infrastructure connections may be necessary during the Review of the Project.

As noted by the Proponent, if the Responsible Minister(s) accept the Board's recommendation that a review of the Project should be conducted, the Minister(s) can direct that the Review be conducted by the Board under Article 12, Part 5 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and pursuant to subsections 94(1)(a)(iii) or (iv) of the *NuPPAA*, or alternatively, could require that the Review be conducted by a federal panel under Article 12, Part 6 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and pursuant to subsections 94(1)(a)(i) and (ii) of the *NuPPAA*. As noted by the Proponent, the project proposal submission was premised on the assumption that the Project would be subject to a Review by the NIRB under Part 5 of the *Nunavut Agreement*. The Government of the Northwest Territories agreed that a Part 5 Review with the participation of affected communities in the Northwest Territories and the Government of the Northwest Territories is appropriate.

⁶ See for example the discussion of these issues in relation to the Back River Project, NIRB File No. 12MN036 Final Hearing Report for the Back River Project, Sabina Gold & Silver Corp., June 15, 2016 (NIRB Doc ID: 303411) and Revised Final Hearing Report for the Back River Mine Project, Sabina Gold & Silver Corp., July 18, 2017 (NIRB Doc ID: 312668).

In the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (2022)*⁷ the NIRB and the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB) agreed to fulfill their respective impact assessment functions by streamlining processes used to assess transboundary impacts and limiting duplication and/or overlap where possible. In 2023 the *Implementation Plan for the Memorandum of Understanding between the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board* was developed and provides more detailed information about how the cooperation, coordination, and collaboration may occur. If required more formal agreements between the two (2) Boards may be necessary and such measures can include project-specific coordinated plans. The NIRB and MVEIRB have initiated meetings to discuss the project and will continue those meetings as the project proposal progresses.

6. Availability of Participant Funding

It is the NIRB's opinion that there are several important factors associated with the further review of the Proposal that highlight the need for participant funding during the assessment, including: the range and scope of the potential impacts of the Proposal, the impacts to the Bathurst and Dolphin and Union caribou herds, and the capacity issues identified by the Board, community organizations, and community members during recent NIRB assessments. Additionally, many of groups asserting constitutionally protected s. 35 rights within Nunavut have clearly stated that they would require participant funding in order to fully participate in the NIRB's process and the Board recognizes the participant funding as a vital mechanism in promoting effective participation by potentially affected groups in any future Review of this proposal.

NIRB DETERMINATION

The Board has carefully considered the factors set out in s. 90 of *NuPPAA*, taking into account the information the Proponent and parties have provided to date, as well as providing its determination on the significance of potential adverse ecosystemic or socio-economic impacts of the Proposal.⁸ It is the Board's determination that, as set out in Article 12, Section 12.4.4(b) of the *Nunavut Agreement* and s. 89(1)(a)(i) and (ii) of *NuPPAA*, "Grays Bay Road and Port" project proposal requires a Review under Article 12, Part 5 or Part 6 of the *Nunavut Agreement* and Part 3 of *NuPPAA*.

⁷ <https://www.nirb.ca/coordination-agreements>

⁸ Significance was assessed by the Board with regard to the factors outlined in s. 90 of *NuPPAA*.

CONCLUSION

This constitutes the Board’s Screening Decision Report with respect to West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.’s (WKR) “Grays Bay Road and Port” project proposal. The NIRB remains available for consultation with the Minister regarding this report as necessary.

Dated December 4, 2024 at Baker Lake, NU.



Kaviq Kaluraq, Chairperson

Attachment: Appendix A: Comment Submissions (NIRB File No. 24XN038)

Appendix A
Comment Submissions (NIRB File No. 24XN038)

| Commenting Party | NIRB Doc ID No. |
|---|------------------------|
| Kitikmeot Inuit Association (KIA) | 351931 |
| Government of Nunavut (GN) | 351941 |
| Government of Canada (GoC) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) • Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) • Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) • Health Canada (HC) • Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) • Transport Canada (TC) | 351940 |
| Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization (Kugluktuk HTO) | 351951 |
| Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) | 351831 |
| Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) | 351790 |
| Tłıchǝ Government (Tłıchǝ) | 351943 |
| Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) | 351877 |
| Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) | 351922 |
| Athabasca Denesųłiné NéNé Land Corporation (ADNLC) | 351957 |
| Caribou Guardians Coalition | 351935 |
| L Anaija | 352272 |
| S Napacheekadluk | 352273 |
| S Tungilik | 352274 |
| Sandra | 352275 |



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Cambridge Bay
Ikaluktutiak
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Francis Emingak
Screening Officer
Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 1360
Cambridge Bay, Nunavut
X0B 0C0

Kugluktuk
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Sent by e-mail: femingak@nirb.ca, info@nirb.ca

Bathurst Inlet
Kingaok
ᓂᓂᓐᓂᓐ

October 30th, 2024

RE: Screening of West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s (WKRC) Gray's Bay Road and Port Project.

Bay Chimo
Umingmaktok
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Dear Francis Emingak, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association's (KIA) consultants in geotechnical engineering, wildlife, water quality and aquatic environment, and fish have reviewed the proposed Grays Bay Road and Port Project, and their comments are in the enclosed screening forms.

Gjoa Haven
Okhoktok
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Our consultants' comments pertain to the areas of wildlife and their habitat; marine mammals and their habitat; birds and their habitat; dust; invasive plant species; terrain; water quality; hydrology; Inuit harvesting activities; and local development in the area.

Taloyoak
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In summary, the construction and operation of the road and port could have significant impacts on a variety of species of wildlife ranging from terrestrial mammals such as caribou, muskox, moose, grizzly bears and wolverines as well as birds and their habitat to marine mammals such as seals, whales, narwhal and polar bears.

Kugaaruk
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The construction and operation of the port could disturb sediment and generate total suspended solids that degrade the aquatic environment of the ocean while construction and operation of the road would alter terrain impacting eskers, snow accumulation and distribution, surface drainage and water flow, and permafrost.

The road requires several culverts to be installed which could alter hydrology, microclimate, and soil moisture leading to localized flooding affecting vegetation type and availability and permafrost.

The road can be a means of introducing invasive species of plants from vehicles which would also generate dust that would fall upon existing native species of



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plants. Consideration would need to be given to this as well as to potentially deleterious substances entering water courses.

The road can also provide greater access to the harvesting of wildlife and fish from previously isolated areas and lakes. This alteration in harvesting activities would have cumulative environmental effects over the lifetime of the project. This may also affect Inuit way of life and the exercise of section 35 rights under the Nunavut Agreement.

The purpose of the road is to facilitate local development leading to more mining projects, further infrastructure is expected to be developed for power distribution, communications, and mine access. Increased vehicle and air traffic is expected from development which would required consideration be given to accumulative effects.

The KIA recommends a Part 5 Review under the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act (NuPPAA). All issues identified along with the potential for accumulated effects over the lifetime of the project warrants such a review by NIRB.

The KIA looks forward to conducting further reviews of the project and participating in the NIRB process to determine impacts and potential mitigation measures for the environment and KIA rights.

Thank you.

Jennifer Amagoalik

Acting Senior Project Officer
Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Department of Lands, Environment and Resources

Cc Wynter Kuliktana, Director, KIA, Department of Lands and Environment



COMMENT FORM FOR NIRB SCREENINGS

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) has a mandate to protect the integrity of the ecosystem for the existing and future residents of Nunavut. To assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the project proposal, NIRB would like to hear your concerns, comments and suggestions about the following project proposal application:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Project Proposal Title: Grays Bay Road and Port | | | |
| Proponent: West Kitikmeot Resources Corp. | | | |
| Location: Kitikmeot | | | |
| Comments Due By: October 30, 2024 | NIRB #: 24XN038 | | |
| <p>Indicate your concerns about the project proposal below:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns <input type="checkbox"/> water quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> terrain <input type="checkbox"/> air quality <input type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities <input type="checkbox"/> community involvement and consultation <input type="checkbox"/> local development in the area <input type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area <input type="checkbox"/> human health issues <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ _____ _____ </td> </tr> </table> <p>Please describe the concerns indicated above:</p> <p>The Kitikmeot Inuit Association’s (KIA) geotechnical engineering consultant was retained to complete a high-level review of West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation’s (WKR) project proposal and nontechnical summary submitted to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB). The review was discipline specific within the focus on permafrost, geology, geochemistry, hydrogeology and climate.</p> <p>The proposed all-weather road and the airstrip cross challenging permafrost terrain, including ice-rich glaciolacustrine deposits, ice wedge polygons, massive ground ice, etc., that is susceptible to impacts from the construction activities, operations as well as climate change. The proposed alignment of 230 km crosses about 230 watercourses, which will require culverts and bridges. The road embankment will change surface drainage conditions and therefore additional culverts will be required to address local drainage as failure to adequately manage it will have negative impacts on the permafrost from newly developed ponding, for example. Considering the proposed design life of 75 years, the design must accommodate major uncertainties in the how environmental conditions, including extrema, may change, specifically air temperatures, precipitation patterns, and runoff. These changing conditions will directly or indirectly impact on the infrastructure as foundation conditions and geohazards will alter over time. Hazards to the proposed infrastructure may originate from thermokarst, sinkholes, flooding, bank erosion, sea level rise, icings, or mass movements, such as active layer detachments, retrogressive thaw slumps, debris flows or rock fall.</p> <p>In order to mitigate adverse effects that the construction of the proposed project in combination with future environmental changes may cause, it is critical that sufficient geotechnical site investigations, terrain mapping and geohazard assessments are completed prior to detailed design and the initiation of construction. A solid understanding of the current subsurface and climatic conditions and how those may change during the proposed design life is required for understanding risks to the environment, the project and its users, which forms the basis for developing appropriate infrastructure design and hazard mitigation measures.</p> | | <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns <input type="checkbox"/> water quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> terrain <input type="checkbox"/> air quality <input type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area | <input type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities <input type="checkbox"/> community involvement and consultation <input type="checkbox"/> local development in the area <input type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area <input type="checkbox"/> human health issues <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ _____ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns <input type="checkbox"/> water quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> terrain <input type="checkbox"/> air quality <input type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area | <input type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities <input type="checkbox"/> community involvement and consultation <input type="checkbox"/> local development in the area <input type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area <input type="checkbox"/> human health issues <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ _____ _____ | | |



October 30, 2024

Dionne Filiatrault
Executive Director
Nunavut Impact Review Board
29 Mitik Street, PO Box 1360
CAMBRIDGE BAY, NU X0B 0C0

NIRB File: 24XN038

Via Email: info@nirb.ca

RE: Notice of Screening and Comment Request for West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation's Grays Bay Road and Port Project Proposal (NIRB File No.: 24XN038)

Dionne Filiatrault,

On September 24, 2024, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (the Board) issued its Notice of Screening and Comment Request for West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation's Grays Bay Road and Port project proposal.

The Board requested that interested parties review documents related to the project proposal and provide comments on:

- Whether the project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; and if so, why;
- Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology, (and providing any recommended mitigation measures); and
- Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal including if a Review is required any additional factors that should be considered as part of that process.

The Northern Projects Management Office is responding on behalf of: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC); Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC); Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO); Natural Resources Canada (NRCan); and, Transport Canada (TC). It is the position of the responding departments that the project proposal warrants an in-depth review by the Board. As requested, please find attached comments from the Government of Canada (Attachments 1-5).

Health Canada has also reviewed the project proposal and has no comments at this time.



The Government of Canada would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to provide comments on the project proposal. Federal departments look forward to participating in further assessment stages for the project proposal, as applicable.

Sincerely,

Melissa Alexander
Senior Project Manager
Northern Projects Management Office

Cc Shari Currie, Regional Director, Prairie and Northern Region, Transport Canada

Thomas Hoggarth, Regional Director of Aquatic Ecosystems, Arctic Region, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Jody Small, Regional Director Prairie and Northern Region, Environmental Protection Operations Directorate

Hieu Vu, Director General, Explosives, Regulatory and Business Services Branch, Lands and Minerals Sector, Natural Resources Canada

Spencer Dewar, A/ Regional Director General, Nunavut Region, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Chantal Roberge, National Director, Environmental Health Programs, Health Canada



CIRNAC Comments to NIRB

Re: Notice of Screening for West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation's "Grays Bay Road and Port" Project Proposal



GCDOCS # 130106561



Nunavut Regional Office
918 Sivumugiaq Street
Iqaluit, NU, X0A 3H0

Your file - Votre référence
24XN038
Our file - Notre référence
GCdocs# 130106561

October 30, 2024

Re: Notice of Screening and Comment Request for West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation's "Grays Bay Road and Port" Project Proposal

On September 24, 2024, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) invited parties to comment on West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation's "Grays Bay Road and Port" project proposal. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) offers the responses below as it pertains to the NIRB's request:

Whether the project proposal is likely to arouse significant public concern; and if so, why.

CIRNAC 1: Project Scope and Public Engagement

CIRNAC notes that, due to the nature, scale and breadth of proposed project activities and components, the project proposal has the potential to arouse significant public concern. The proposed project may cause significant adverse eco-systemic and socio-economic effects (moreover, those effects may not be highly predictable in the local context). The magnitude of concern would be clarified through further opportunities for the public to provide comments on the proposed project. Community information sessions conducted by the NIRB and continued engagement by the Proponent are appropriate measures to assess the concern related to this project.

Issues that should be considered as part of any consultation activities should include:

- Incorporation of Inuit knowledge and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit into project activities;
- Mitigation measures designed to reduce disturbances to wildlife and the environment;
- The experience of community members who participate in traditional and non-traditional activities within or in close proximity to the project area;
- Training and employment opportunities for Kitikmeot community members;
- Procurement opportunities for local and Inuit-owned firms; and
- Regular updates on the status of project activities.

Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why.

Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; and if so, why.



CIRNAC 2: Eco-systemic and Socio-Economic Effects

CIRNAC is of the view that the project has the potential to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects, and significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities.

Therefore, the potential adverse effects of the Grays Bay Road and Port project would be most appropriately assessed through a full environmental review. CIRNAC conducted a preliminary assessment of the Grays Bay Road and Port project proposal and identified the following components of the project that have the potential to cause significant effects and merit more in-depth assessment:

- The anticipated impacts of construction and operation activities on, water quality and quantity, vegetation, landforms and permafrost features in the area;
- The anticipated socio-economic impacts throughout the project's life cycle (i.e., Construction, Operations, Potential Temporary Closure/ Care and Maintenance, and Closure);
- The potential adverse impacts on the surrounding environment of the proposed development activities, including but not limited to the Grays Bay Port (Wharf), the Grays Bay Road Northern and Southern Termini, and the facilities required to support operations;
- Consideration for potential impacts to the groundwater regime and provisions for management and potential contamination of groundwater;
- The impacts of potential accidents or malfunctions during construction and operation;
- The potential for ongoing and incremental land use activities associated with this development and other mining and transportation activity in the Kitikmeot region to result in cumulative eco-systemic and socio-economic impacts;
- Consideration for potential transboundary impacts, given the proximity to the Northwest Territories border and the proposed connection to the Tibbitt to Contwoyto winter road;
- The adequacy of proposed mitigation, monitoring, and adaptive management measures.

Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology, (and providing any recommended mitigation measures).

CIRNAC 3: Potential Adverse Effects and Mitigation Measures

IRNAC is of the view that a project of this scale operating in the North is not the type where potential adverse effects are highly predictable; there is a lack of comparable projects in Nunavut that have undergone Impact Assessments. Recommended mitigation measures could be provided following a more in-depth review in the areas of CIRNAC's jurisdictional responsibility. This responsibility in relation to the proposed project includes Ministerial responsibilities for approval of the water licence and administration of Crown land. Furthermore, CIRNAC appreciates being of assistance to the NIRB throughout the impact assessment process and expects to offer expertise in the following areas:



- Environmental impact assessment methodology
- Land contamination
- Surface water quality and quantity
- Groundwater quality and quantity
- Permafrost
- Waste management
- Vegetation
- Hazardous waste materials management
- Water and wastewater management and treatment
- Quarry design and construction
- Environmental monitoring and management plans
- Cumulative effects and alternatives assessment
- Geotechnical engineering
- Geochemistry (potential for acid rock drainage/metal leaching)
- Reclamation planning
- Socio-economic Impact Assessment

Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal including if a Review is required and any additional factors that should be considered as part of that process.

CIRNAC 4: Potential for Positive Effects to Inuit through Employment, Training, and Procurement Opportunities

CIRNAC recommends that the Proponent prioritize the employment, training, and contracting of Inuit and Inuit firms located in Kitikmeot communities. Such efforts will allow for positive effects to be realized by community members and the local Inuit population. As a result, Inuit and Inuit-owned businesses of the five impacted Kitikmeot communities, including Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Kugaaruk, Taloyoak, and Gjoa Haven, should be supported in ways that promote their inclusion in the project's development through employment, training, and procurement opportunities that may be made available.

CIRNAC appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and looks forward to working with the NIRB and the Proponent throughout any further phases related to this project. Should you have any questions, please contact Courtney White or David Abernethy by e-mail at courtney.white@rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca or david.abernethy@rcaanc-cirnac.ca.

Sincerely,



Courtney White
A/Manager, Impact Assessment





Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program
Arctic Region
301 – 5204 50th Ave. (Franklin)
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
X1A 1E2

Programme de protection du poisson et de son habitat
Région de l'Arctique
301 – 5204 50th Ave. (Franklin)
Yellowknife, Territoires du Nord-Ouest
X1A 1E2

October 8, 2024

Your file *Votre référence*
24XN038

Our file *Notre référence*
24-HCAA-02338

Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 1360 (29 Mitik St.)
Cambridge Bay, NU
X0B 0C0

Subject: West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s (WKRC) Grays Bay Road and Port Project Proposal

To whom it may concern,

On September 24, 2024, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) invited parties to comment on the West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s (WKRC) "Grays Bay Road and Port" project proposal (NIRB file number: 24XN038). The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has reviewed the information submitted to NIRB and considered the potential environmental effects of the proposed project based on its mandate, i.e. the management, protection and conservation of fish and their habitats pursuant to the *Fisheries Act* and the *Species at-Risk Act*.

DFO is of the opinion that the proposed project warrants an in-depth analysis in relation to our mandate, specifically its potential impacts on fish and fish habitat. This is due to the inclusion in the project proposal of the construction and operation of structures near or in fish habitat (e.g., a deep-water port, a small craft harbour, a 230-km all-season access road, bridges and culverts). DFO's technical expertise pertaining to the *Fisheries Act* and the *Species at-Risk Act* will support the NIRB's assessment of this project's potential effects on the receiving environmental and on the valued ecosystem components.

If more information is required, please contact Natalie Grishaber at Natalie.Grishaber@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Anna-Maija LaFlamme
A/ Senior Biologist
Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program
Arctic Region Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Cc: Tatiana Leclerc-Beaulieu, DFO

Environmental Protection Operations Directorate

Prairie & Northern Region
5019 52nd Street, 4th Floor
P.O. Box 2310
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7

ECCC File: 6300 000 039/002
NIRB File: 24XN038



October 28, 2024

via email at: info@nirb.ca

Dionne Filiatrault
Executive Director
Nunavut Impact Review Board
29 Mitik Street
P.O. Box 1360
Cambridge Bay, NU X0B 0C0

Dear Dionne Filiatrault:

RE: 24XN038– West Kitikmeot Resources Corp – Grays Bay Road and Port – Preliminary Screening

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) has reviewed the information submitted to the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) regarding the above-mentioned screening.

ECCC provides expert information and knowledge to project assessments on subjects within the department's mandate, including climate change, air quality, water quality, biodiversity, environmental preparedness and emergencies. This work includes reviewing proponent characterization of environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures. We provide advice to decision-makers regarding a proponent's characterization of environmental effects, the efficacy of their proposed mitigation activities, and may suggest additional mitigation measures. Any comments received from ECCC in this context does not relieve the proponent of its obligations to respect all applicable federal legislation.

ECCC recommends a board review of this project to better understand the impacts it will have on water quality, air quality and species at risk within the project area.

ECCC has identified the following items which fall within its mandate and areas of expertise that we feel require further technical review to assess whether the Project will cause significant adverse eco-systemic impacts. A Board Review of the Project would ensure that the following topics and the supporting material provided could be adequately reviewed.



1. Freshwater Environment

Comment

ECCC has identified the following items that may potentially negatively effect the freshwater environment:

- leaks and spills of fuel and other contaminants may impact water quality of fish bearing waterbodies.
- wastewater, sewage and solid waste, including spills, releases, runoff and leachate may impact water quality of fish bearing waterbodies.
- runoff and leaching of nitrogen-based explosives and residues resulting from spills, may impact water quality of fish bearing waterbodies (nutrient-related issues).
- water withdrawal from lakes and other fish bearing waterbodies may result in impacts (i.e., reduced dissolved oxygen levels) and fish mortality.

ECCC Recommendations

ECCC recommends that the Proponent develop:

- a spill prevention, planning, and response measures and plans.
- an effective waste management procedures and plans.
- measures to minimize explosive residues and avoid spills, runoff, and leaching of explosives and their residues.
- mitigation measures and associated monitoring to avoid adverse effects on dissolved oxygen levels and aquatic life.

2. Marine Environment

Comment

ECCC has identified the following items that have the potential to negatively effect the marine environment:

- the port construction and operations activities, including but not limited to dredging have the potential to negatively impact marine water quality.
- spills of contaminants or hazardous materials.
- wastewater and sewage.

ECCC Recommendations

ECCC recommends that the Proponent develop:

- sediment and erosion control mitigation measures for the construction and operation of the port, and associated monitoring, to mitigate potential negative impacts on marine water quality.
- spill prevention, planning, and response measures and plans.
- effective management procedures and plans for wastewater and sewage. Effluent monitoring measures should be developed to assess discharge water quality to mitigate

potential negative impacts on marine water quality from discharges/releases and spills of wastewater and sewage.

3. Groundwater

Comment

According to Section 8.7 of the Project Proposal document, there is potential for effects (changes) to groundwater quality and a list of potential negative impacts were provided. ECCC notes that impacts to groundwater quality may have impacts to surface water quality in areas where groundwater daylights to surface waters.

ECCC has also identified the following items that have the potential to negatively effect the groundwater along the proposed route:

- construction activities have the potential to affect shallow groundwater.
- spills, runoff and leaching of nitrogen-based explosives and residues negatively impacting groundwater quality (nutrient-related issues).

ECCC Recommendations

ECCC recommends that the Proponent develop:

- measures to minimize adverse effects on groundwater quality from construction activities.
- measures to minimize explosive residues and avoid spills, runoff, and leaching of explosives and their residues.

4. Sediment Quality and Sediment Control

Comment

According to Sections 8.9, 8.10, 8.11 and 8.12 of the Project Proposal documents, the project could potentially affect sediment quality in the freshwater and marine environments. Effect pathways include sedimentation during construction and operations from instream works at watercourse crossings, dredging, and other activities. Discharges, site runoff, vessel operations, port maintenance activities, and other effect pathways were also identified.

Changes to sediment quality could potentially lead to adverse effects on water quality. Many substances can form associations with particulate matter and, if introduced into the aquatic environment, could become incorporated into aquatic sediments. Sediments can act as both sinks and subsequently sources of substances that have entered the aquatic environment. When substances are released from sediments, there is potential for associated changes to water quality.

ECCC notes potential negative impacts to the water quality of fish bearing waterbodies resulting from sedimentation and erosion during the construction of the all-season road and associated water crossing structures, including numerous bridges and culverts.

ECCC Recommendation(s)

ECCC recommends that the Proponent develop sediment and erosion control mitigation measures for the construction of the all-season road to mitigate potential negative impacts to the receiving fish bearing waterbodies. Measures should also be developed to contain suspended sediments during in-water works and monitor the effectiveness of containment.

5. Acid Rock Drainage

Comment

ECCC has identified the following items related to acid rock drainage from potentially acid generating rock along the proposed route:

- Potential negative impacts to groundwater quality resulting from release of contaminants from rock due to acid rock drainage or metal leaching.
- Potential negative impacts to the water quality of fish bearing waterbodies from quarrying and road construction resulting from release of contaminants from rock due to acid rock drainage or metal leaching (ARD/ML).

ECCC Recommendation(s)

ECCC recommends that the Proponent develop procedures to screen possible sources of ARD/ML (including rock cuts, quarries, stockpiles, embankments and armoring materials) for ARD/ML potential.

6. Species At Risk

Comment

ECCC has identified where additional information is required for the department to complete a technical review of the potential negative impacts on the ecosystem, and on the proposed measures to mitigate those impacts.

The following Species at Risk effects and mitigation measures are missing from the project proposal:

- Buff-breasted Sandpiper
- Eskimo Curlew
- Red Knot (islandica subspecies)
- Rusty Blackbird
- Transverse Lady Beetle

ECCC Recommendation(s)

ECCC recommends the proponent develops plans to mitigate impacts on species at risk and their habitat.

7. Migratory Birds

Comment

ECCC has identified where additional information is required for the department to complete a technical review of the potential negative impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat, and on the proposed measures to mitigate those impacts.

The following potential impacts, effects and mitigation measures are missing from the project proposal:

- Predation pathways
- Filling in ponds or wetlands
- Brushing and laydowns in nesting areas
- Landscaping, grading, and piling soils
- Sea duck colonies' exposure to increased shipping.

The shipping routes have not been adequately considered as part of the application proposal study area. Shipping routes have not been directly proposed and have the potential to fall within Key Habitat Sites (KHS) at Lambert Channel and Bathurst and Elu Inlets. These sites are protected, and both are classified as highly risk intolerant terrestrial and marine KHS with nesting island sea ducks.

ECCC Recommendation(s)

ECCC recommends the proponent develop plans to mitigate impacts and manage risks to migratory birds and their habits. Should the project proceed to a Board Review, more information regarding shipping traffic, shipping routes, and shipping schedules would help reviewers assess the risks and mitigation adequacy of avoiding protected key habitat areas.

8. Species At Risk and Migratory Birds

Comment

Impacts and mitigations should be comparable to other all-weather road and port projects in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

Timing of construction and blasting activities is the most highly recommended strategy to mitigate and reduce impacts to birds and species at risk.

ECCC Recommendation(s)

ECCC recommends that the timing of construction and blasting activities should be planned to avoid disturbance to species at risk and during nesting periods, which in this area are from mid-May to mid-August in nesting zone N9 and late May to mid-August in nesting zone N10.

9. Construction Vehicle Emissions Standards

Comment

Section 8.1.3 mentions the intent to reduce atmospheric emissions where practical. This is a large-scale project with associated air emissions. The need to source construction equipment externally provides an opportunity to seek equipment containing engines meeting Tier 4 emission standards which would provide for considerable reductions in air emissions.

ECCC Recommendation(s)

ECCC requests a commitment to source construction equipment with engines that meet Tier 4 emission standards where practical.

10. Storage of Clean Fuels for Marine Shipping

Comment

Section 2.1.1.3 provides a description of port facilities including fuel storage systems. Previous studies pre-date the establishment of the Canadian Arctic Emission Control Area (ECA), which comes into effect in March 1, 2026, and is intended to improve air quality. The ECA requirements entail the use of fuels with sulfur levels of no more than 0.10% mass/mass.

ECCC Recommendation(s)

ECCC recommends that the proponent familiarize themselves with the new requirements and compliance measures, including marine shipping fuels, under the Canadian Arctic ECA. The new emissions control areas can be accessed at <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/canadian-arctic-and-norwegian-sea-new-emission-control-areas>

ECCC notes that potential negative effects may be similar to those of other comparable projects and as such are expected to be predictable and mitigatable with known technology. However, project design, mitigation measures, monitoring and adaptive management will be key to limiting the intensity, duration and scale of potential negative impacts.

If you need more information, please contact Russell Wykes at (867) 446-1263 or Russell.Wykes@ec.gc.ca

Sincerely,



Leslie Yasul
A/ Environmental Assessment Manager, PNR

cc: Eva Walker, Head, EA North (NT and NU)
Russell Wykes, Senior Environmental Assessment Officer, EA North



October 10, 2024

Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 1360 (29 Mitik St.)
Cambridge Bay, NU
X0B 0C0

Subject: West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s Grays Bay Road and Port – Nunavut Impact Review Board's Request for Comments (Notice of Screening)

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) received the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) letter dated September 24, 2024, which requested parties to review and provide comments on West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s Grays Bay Road and Port Project Proposal (the Project).

Specifically, the NIRB requested comments on:

1. *Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse eco-systemic or socio-economic effects; and if so, why; and*
2. *Whether the project proposal is likely to cause significant adverse impacts on wildlife habitat or Inuit harvest activities; and if so, why.*

NRCan notes that the Grays Bay Road and Port Project is a major road and port facility, similar to the one previously initiated (NIRB file: 17XN011). Limited information on potential environmental effects and baseline is provided in the proposal, and a more in-depth review of the Project is required in order to determine if there is the potential for significant adverse environmental effects.

Within the context of NRCan's mandate, the following technical expertise will be provided if the NIRB refers the project for a Review as per the *Nunavut Project Planning and Assessment Act*:

- marine geosciences;
- permafrost; and
- explosives storage and manufacture.

NRCan may revise its technical expertise depending on additional information that may be relevant to the Project activities and could be provided as the Project moves forward.

3. *Whether the project proposal is of a type where the potential adverse effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology, (and providing any recommended mitigation measures).*

NRCan notes that with respect to explosives storage and manufacture, the *Explosives Act* and Regulations ensure the advancement of explosives safety and security technology. As a result, explosives storage and manufacture is not expected to cause adverse effects and any potential



effects are highly predictable and mitigable with known technology as per the *Explosives Act* and Regulations.

4. *Any matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal including if a Review is required any additional factors that should be considered as part of that process.*

NRCan is responsible for administering the *Explosives Act*, Regulations, and pursuing the advancement of explosives safety and security technology. Our principal priority is the safety and security of the public and of all workers involved in the explosives industry in Canada. Through the Explosives Regulatory Division, NRCan provides services and support to the explosives industry, including manufacturers, importers, distributors, and users of explosives.

The manufacturing of explosives requires a licence issued by NRCan under the *Explosives Act*. That licence could include the storage of explosives.

Should you have any questions or if you require clarification, please contact Clarisse Fiset (clarisse.fiset@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca).

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Clarisse Fiset
Impact Assessment Officer, Impact Assessment Division
Office of the Chief Scientist
Natural Resources Canada
Government of Canada

Cc: Pierre-Olivier Émond, Lands and Minerals Sector
Aruna Dixit, Lands and Minerals Sector
Peter Unger, Office of the Chief Scientist



Transport Transports
Canada Canada

P.O. Box 8550
3rd Floor, Programs – Environmental Programs
344 Edmonton Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0P6

Your file/Votre référence
NIRB file: 24XN038

TC file/Notre référence
7075-70-1-647

October 24, 2024

Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 1360 (29 Mitik St.)
Cambridge Bay, NU X0B 0C0

RE: West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s Grays Bay Road and Port Project Proposal

To the Nunavut Impact Review Board:

Transport Canada is responding to the Nunavut Impact Review Board's (NIRB) request to parties to comment on the West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.'s (WKRC) "Grays Bay Road and Port" August 2024 project proposal (NIRB file number: 24XN038). Transport Canada has reviewed the project proposal and identified project components and activities that are subject to the Department's regulatory mandate. These include:

- Construction of over 200 water crossings, which include single or multi-span bridges and culverts.
- Construction and operations of a Grays Bay Port, which includes:
 - Development of wharves.
 - Dredging of sea floor.
 - Small craft harbour.
 - Mobilization of construction materials and equipment via two (2) ocean freighters and barges, lightering and delivering to the Grays Bay shore, followed by annual sealift deliveries during construction and operations.
 - Future vessel traffic to and from the port.
 - Establishment of fuel storage facilities to initially contain 10 million litres (ML) of fuel with the potential to expand to 160 ML of fuel.
- Construction of an 1,800 m airstrip, possibly to be expanded to 2,400 meters.
- Water withdrawals.
- Transportation of dangerous goods (hazardous materials).

Given Transport Canada's regulatory responsibilities for the project, the Minister of Transport is a 'responsible Minister' under the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*.

Based on Transport Canada's experience with other large project proposals in Nunavut, it is the Department's opinion the proposed project is likely to be a cause of significant public concern. Therefore, Transport Canada is of the view the proposed project warrants an in-depth review by NIRB to identify these concerns and potential mitigation measures to address them.



Transport Transports
Canada Canada

If you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact Scott Kidd
(Regional Environmental Advisor) at scott.kidd@tc.gc.ca.

Regards,

ZellisSkiba
Digitally signed by ZellisSkiba, Margaret
DN: c=CA, o=GC, ou=TC-TC, cn="ZellisSkiba, Margaret"
Reason: I am approving this document
Location:
Date: 2024.10.23 08:07:42-0500
Foxit PDF Editor Version: 13.1.3

, Margaret
Margaret Zellis-Skiba

Acting Regional Manager, Environmental Programs, Prairie and Northern Region
Transport Canada, Prairie and Northern Region / Government of Canada

From: [Amanda Dumond](#)
To: [nirb.info](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Grays Bay NIRB 125987/24XN038
Date: October 31, 2024 7:35:34 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links, open attachments or follow direction, unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning,

I'm on travel right now, but there are our comments, I apologize for submission, but I thought the deadline was today,

Our board does not support this project:

- our Dolphin and Union caribou are at a critically low level
- We are still cleaning old exploration sites, etc
- This will be a road to nowhere, it won't directly benefit communities
- We need to keep the land healthy
- Other roads in Nunavut show that caribou do not like crossing roads
- There are many mines and exploration sites in our region and there's no capacity to fill jobs
- Work would take place in key habitat areas, specifically caribou calving grounds

If you have any questions, please let me know,

Thank you,

Amanda



October 15, 2024

Francis Emingak
Screening Officer
Nunavut Impact Review Board
PO BOX 1360
CAMBRIDGE BAY, NU X0B 0C0
info@nirb.ca

by Email

Dear Francis Emingak:

Government of Northwest Territories' Submission on the Notice of Screening for the West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation's Grays Bay Road and Port Project Proposal (file number 24XN038)

On behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), I am pleased to provide comments in response to the Nunavut Impact Review Board's (NIRB) September 24, 2024 Notice of Screening and request for comments on the West Kitikmeot Resources Corporation's Grays Bay Road and Port (GBRP) Project Proposal (the Project).

Although the Project is located outside the Northwest Territories (NWT), it may have impacts on the NWT environment, residents, and communities, and is therefore of considerable interest to the GNWT. The GNWT, as well as several Indigenous governments and resource management boards in the NWT, participated actively in NIRB proceedings related to an earlier version of this project (file number 17XN011). In reviewing the current proposal, the GNWT has considered, where relevant, comments and other filings from these previous proceedings.

Areas of interest and concern:

All GNWT departments have had the opportunity to review the Project Proposal and related materials, and have identified the following areas of interest:

- Wildlife and their habitat;
- Marine mammals;
- Traditional uses of land;
- Community health and well-being, including impacts to health infrastructure;
- Indigenous harvesting activities;
- Transboundary impacts; and
- Socio-economic considerations.

Specific comments on some of these areas of interest are provided below.

.../2

Wildlife:

As a primary authority for wildlife conservation and management in the Northwest Territories (NWT), the GNWT is responsible for working with wildlife co-management partners within the NWT and other jurisdictions to ensure that transboundary wildlife populations harvested in the NWT are managed in a way that supports their sustainable use by current and future generations. As part of this responsibility, the GNWT collaborates with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, regulators and stakeholders in Nunavut on wildlife management issues of shared importance.

Caribou:

While recognizing the potential benefits of the proposed road to Inuit, Nunavummiut and the NWT, the GNWT has concerns about potential adverse impacts of the Project on populations and habitat of transboundary wildlife species. In particular, the GNWT is concerned about the potential adverse impacts of the Project on caribou, including barren-ground caribou (Bathurst, Bluenose-East, Beverly and Ahik herds) and Dolphin and Union caribou, which are all transboundary herds of great significance to Indigenous communities in the NWT. Indigenous peoples have relationships with caribou and caribou harvesting that support language and knowledge transmission, as well as cultural and social well-being. The GNWT notes that the proponent has identified impacts on caribou as a key consideration in understanding the impacts of the Project (e.g. Project Proposal, Sections 1.1.2 and 1.1.4 Valued Components and Other Factors, Section 7.2: Potential Changes to Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat, Section 8.5: Cumulative Effects Assessment).

Of greatest concern is that the proposed road would cut through the western portion of the Bathurst caribou herd's calving ground, as used consistently since 1996. This herd has declined by 99% from an estimated peak in 1986 of 470,000 to a most recent estimate of 6,850 in 2022. The decline has resulted in very difficult management decisions, including closure of all harvest, including Indigenous harvest, in the NWT, and restriction of Indigenous harvest in Nunavut to 10 bulls. Calving grounds are widely considered, both from a scientific and a Traditional Knowledge perspective, as the most sensitive habitat for migratory barren-ground caribou herds. Cows with young calves are considered to be the most sensitive of caribou sex and age classes to disturbance. Calving grounds are special areas that cows migrate to annually, where a combination of limited predator numbers and suitable feeding conditions occurs that is favorable to cows giving birth. Any factors that impede recovery of the herd, even small-scale disturbances that reduce calf survival, can affect Inuit and other Indigenous peoples' ability to harvest this herd.

Another potential impact pathway in relation to caribou would be the increase in shipping traffic through the Coronation Gulf. Dolphin and Union caribou migrate to the southern part of Victoria Island to cross the sea ice on the Coronation Gulf to their winter range on the mainland, and the majority will cross in a short window of time. An increase in shipping traffic, including icebreaking, and changes in timing and patterns of sea ice formation could delay and potentially prevent Dolphin and Union caribou to migrate safely across the Coronation Gulf. Poor sea ice formation from climate change and increased marine traffic has already led to delays in fall migration and an increase in the number of caribou drowning during sea ice crossings. Sea ice crossings are widely considered, both from a scientific and Traditional Knowledge perspective, as the most sensitive habitat for Dolphin and Union caribou.

Barren-ground caribou and Dolphin and Union caribou are important at a territorial and national level. The GNWT is currently cooperatively involved in management planning for both barren-ground caribou and Dolphin and Union caribou with the Government of Nunavut and Environment and Climate Change Canada; this work should be considered in any further review of the Project. In 2016, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed barren-ground caribou in northern Canada as Threatened, and the NWT Species at Risk Committee similarly assessed barren-ground caribou in the NWT as Threatened. In 2017, COSEWIC assessed Dolphin and Union caribou as Endangered, and the NWT Species at Risk Committee re-assessed Dolphin and Union caribou in the NWT as Endangered in 2023. Under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, a recovery strategy will be required if these species are listed and identification and protection of critical habitat will be a required component of such a plan. For migratory barren-ground caribou herds, the calving grounds would likely be considered critical habitats, whereas sea ice crossings in the Coronation Gulf would likely be considered critical habitats for migratory Dolphin and Union caribou. Given the regional and national interest in these species, calving grounds and sea ice crossings need to be given special consideration when assessing the Project.

Marine mammals:

Potential adverse impacts of the Project, notably the increase in shipping traffic in the Coronation Gulf, on marine wildlife is also of concern to the GNWT as marine wildlife is critical to the Indigenous communities of the Beaufort region in the NWT. As with caribou, Indigenous peoples' harvesting of marine mammals is a means of transmission of language and Traditional Knowledge, and is tied to cultural and social well-being.

Socio-economic considerations:

The assessment area for socio-economic impacts includes the Kitikmeot communities and Yellowknife, and also considers the broader potential socio-economic effects on Nunavut and the Northwest Territories (Section 9 Potential Effects of the Project on People and Communities). As well, the GNWT notes that the proponent has identified the potential for the Project to have socio-economic impacts and benefits to people and communities in the NWT. The GNWT is interested in understanding these potential socio-economic impacts and related cumulative effects of the Project on the well-being of NWT residents, as well as possible impacts to healthcare service delivery as a result of potential temporary increased service provision as a result of a health emergency and evacuation during construction (see Section 9.4.2.3).

Potential transboundary effects identified in Section 10.2.4 (Transboundary Effects) include effects and cumulative effects on the health and well-being of residents of NWT communities as a result of employment during the construction of the Project; effects on health service delivery; increased economic and employment opportunities; and effects to traditional land use by traditional land users who practice traditional activities on both sides of the Nunavut-Northwest Territories border. Changes to traditional land use may contribute to adverse cumulative effects on cultural well-being. In particular, adverse impacts to caribou populations could contribute to cumulative impacts on cultural or social well-being for Indigenous peoples who rely on caribou and caribou hunting.

The GNWT notes that the Project could present economic development opportunities for both Nunavut and NWT residents. Subject to appropriate mitigations, the GNWT is supportive of projects led by Northerners that seek to ensure direct benefits to Northern residents. Given the long-term vision of linking the GBRP to the Canadian Transportation Network, via the GNWT's proposed Slave Geological Province Corridor Project, the GNWT has a vested interest in working with the proponent, Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, NIRB, and the Government of Nunavut, to ensure development of both projects are sustainable.

Other:

The GNWT notes the proponent's statements in the Project Proposal that the Project will include use of the Tibbitt-Contwoyto Winter Road (TCWR) in the NWT, particularly during construction. The GNWT is interested in better understanding the potential impacts of the Project on the operation and maintenance of the TCWR, in particular as increased use/traffic may impact Bathurst caribou migration, and may require additional mitigation and management actions from the GNWT and our Indigenous partners.

The GNWT also notes that the Project Proposal describes the road as being a "controlled access road," with access to be controlled at Jericho Station and Grays Bay Port, but does not provide further details. The GNWT is interested in understanding the authorities that would allow for access to be controlled and the methods for such control.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

The GNWT notes that the proponent expects the Project to be referred for further review by NIRB and makes multiple references in the Project Proposal to providing additional information and analysis in studies, reports, and plans to be provided in or alongside a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The GNWT agrees with the proponent that further review could add value to this Project. The GNWT notes that recent reviews by NIRB of projects in the West Kitikmeot under Article 12, Part 5 of the Nunavut Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement and under the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act* (NuPPAA) have included consideration of transboundary concerns. GNWT has participated in these reviews, with a focus on potential impacts to the NWT environment, people, and communities, and intends to take a similar focus when participating in further review of this Project. Should the Project be referred to further review, the GNWT will work collaboratively with the proponent, NIRB and Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations with the goal of managing and conserving transboundary wildlife and protecting and providing for the health and well-being of the people of the NWT.

Given the potential of the proposed road to impact important wildlife populations in the NWT, the GNWT recommends that any further review have particular focus on transboundary and cumulative impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat, and traditional use of wildlife populations. In particular, very careful consideration needs to be given to how potential impacts to caribou calving grounds, cows and calves can be mitigated. The GNWT notes that the Project Proposal does not provide sufficient detail and consideration of how adverse impacts to caribou will be mitigated, managed and monitored. While the Project Proposal refers to mitigations that “will likely be included in the Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plan”, the GNWT believes that a further review is necessary to help develop approaches to mitigation and monitoring and to investigate the extent to which proposed impacts can sufficiently avoid, minimize, and detect Project impacts.

Given the level of interest from NWT Indigenous governments and resource management boards in the 2017-2018 proceedings, the GNWT recommends that any NIRB workplan for further review of the Project include engagement with Indigenous governments and communities, and resource management boards in the NWT. The GNWT also recommends that the review consider NWT Indigenous governments’ and communities’ concerns and any traditional or community knowledge they provide to NIRB. GNWT understands that Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada will make participant funding available to organizations in the NWT, as well as in Nunavut.

Finally, given the proponent’s statements that the current Project is “substantively similar” to the project proposed in 2017, GNWT understands that provisions in NuPPAA concerning consideration of and reliance on previous proceedings would apply to any further review.

Closing Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to inform NIRB’s screening of the GBRP. The GNWT looks forward to participating in future proceedings related to this Project. Should NIRB or any reviewers have any questions about this submission, please contact Aswathy Mary (Ash) Varghese, Project Assessment Analyst, by email at Ash.Varghese@gov.nt.ca or by phone at 867-767-9180 ext. 24024, or me by email at Lorraine.Seale@gov.nt.ca or by phone at (867) 767-9180 ext. 24020.

Sincerely,



Lorraine Seale
Director
Impact Assessment and Security Management
Environment and Climate Change



COMMENT FORM FOR NIRB SCREENINGS

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) has a mandate to protect the integrity of the ecosystem for the existing and future residents of Nunavut. To assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the project proposal, NIRB would like to hear your concerns, comments and suggestions about the following project proposal application:

| | |
|---|---|
| Project Proposal Title: <u>Grays Bay Road and Port</u> | |
| Proponent: <u>West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.</u> | |
| Location: <u>Kitikmeot</u> | |
| Comments Due By: <u>October 15, 2024</u> | NIRB #: <u>24XN038</u> |
| Indicate your concerns about the project proposal below: | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> water quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> terrain | <input type="checkbox"/> community involvement and consultation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> air quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local development in the area |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> human health issues |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area | _____ |
| Please describe the concerns indicated above: | |
| <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Draft Scope and Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines for the “Gray’s Bay Road and Port” Project Proposal. The Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC), as per the <i>Inuvialuit Final Agreement</i>, represents the collective Inuvialuit interest in wildlife.</p> <p>As mentioned in this new project proposal under Section 1.1.1 Review History, “The Project is substantively similar in scope and location to the Grays Bay Road and Port Project previously proposed ... in 2017 (NIRB File 17XN011)” (p. 1.1). Although Kitikmeot Inuit Association is no longer the proponent, the new proponent, West Kitikmeot Resources (WKR), anticipates that NIRB will rely on information from the previous proposal since this new project proposal is “substantively similar in scope and location” (p. 1.2). Furthermore, WKR “requests that the NIRB re-issue a draft scope list for comment as part of its review” (p. 1.3), to which IGC asks NIRB to consider our concerns in regard to this project proposal.</p> <p>IGC would like to reiterate our concerns from the previous project which remains for this new project:</p> | |



Tłı̄chǫ Government

Box 412, Behchokǫ, NT X0E 0Y0 • Tel: (867) 392-6381 • Fax: (867) 392-6389 • www.tlı̄cho.ca

October 30, 2024

Chairperson of the Nunavut Impact Review Board
29 Mitik Street
P.O. Box 1360
Cambridge Bay, NU
X0B 0C0

Re: 24XN038 - Grays Bay Road and Port Proposal – Tłı̄chǫ Government Comments

Dzẹ nezi (Good Day) Marjorie Kaviq Kaluraq,

The Tłı̄chǫ Government (TG) would like to thank the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) again for inviting us to comment on the Grays Bay Road and Port Project proposal. TG provided comments on the previous Grays Bay Road and Port NIRB File: 17XN011. We reiterate our concerns over the road's potential impacts on caribou, caribou migration, and Tłı̄chǫ harvesting rights, as well as potential impacts from future phases of a road that may go into Mǫwhì Gogha Dè Nı̄ttlèè, to the Nunavut Border, and potentially beyond.

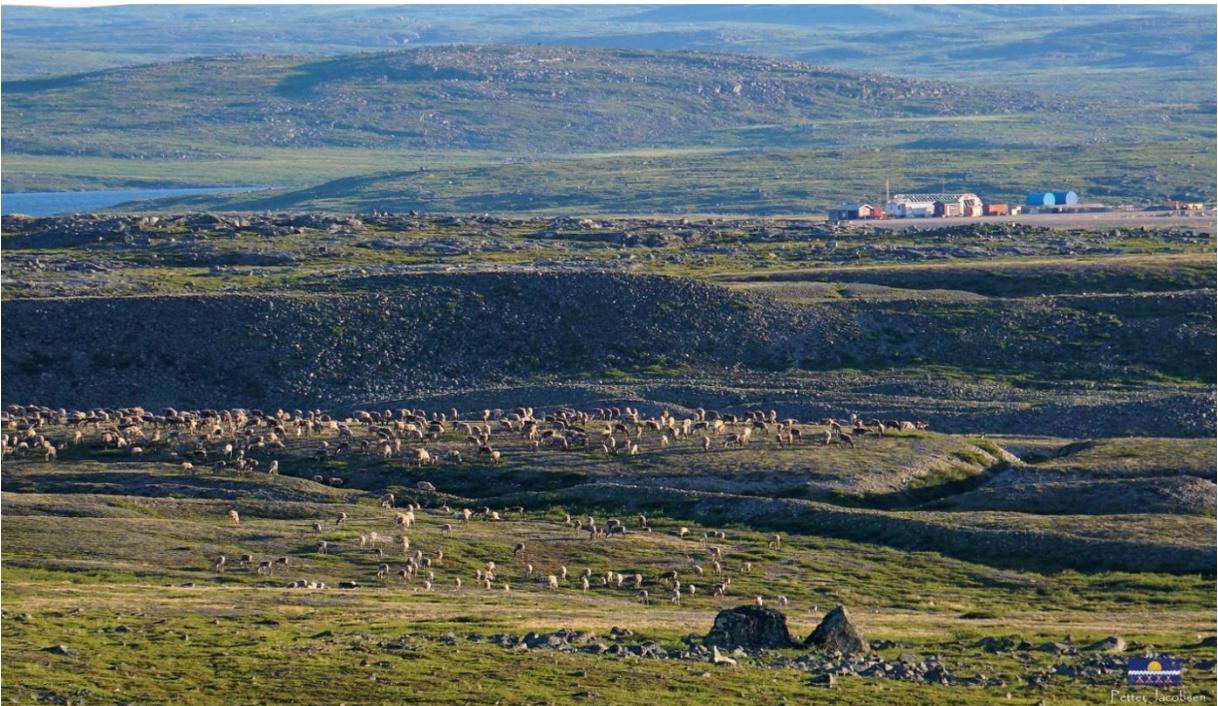


Figure 1. Ekwǫ waiting at the end of the valley north of Jericho Mine (photo taken by Petter Jacobsen, July 2017)

The proposal to construct a road on the calving and post-calving grounds of the Kòk'etì Ekwò (Bathurst Caribou) raises serious concerns for TG. The proposed road could disrupt the herd's natural migration from its calving grounds to its post-calving and summer ranges—an area with rich habitat the herd depends on every summer. Obstructions to this key migration corridor are likely to cause significant adverse impacts on the herd's health while they are already vulnerable and impact the ability for the herd to recover. Consequently, this may affect ability for ekwò to move south to T̄ichq̄ traditional lands where T̄ichq̄ rely on ekwò to exercise their constitutionally-protected harvesting rights and to practice T̄ichq̄ language, culture, and way of life. Considering the impacts from blocking this key migration corridor, the dire state of the Bathurst herd, and the management actions and sacrifices T̄ichq̄ are taking to try to save this herd, a discussion on alternate routes or variations should be considered before further decisions are made.

In addition to impacts on critical habitat, T̄ichq̄ are concerned for potential illegal harvesting of the Bathurst herd. Meat wastage and illegal harvest has been well documented on the TCWR and is contributing to the decline of the Bathurst herd. The proposed road will allow all-year access to the Bathurst range and allow hunters easy access and the potential for overharvesting. TG are concerned with the impacts of harvesting on the declining caribou herd.

Protecting the caribou is a significant and complex task that requires many different groups to work together through many different approaches. Given the significance of this project through a caribou lens and as a potential part of a larger transportation system, we expect that the project will be subject to a full environmental review.

The T̄ichq̄ desire to continue collaborating on a balanced approach relating to the protection of caribou habitat and migration of the shared herds, while at the same time recognizing room for types of sustainable economic development. We look forward to working with everyone through this process.

For future communication related to this proposal from either NIRB or the West Kitikmeot Resources Corp., please contact the Lands Regulation Division of TG by contacting Violet Camsell-Blondin, Manager of Lands Regulation (Violet.CamsellBlondin@tlichoc.ca), cc'ing lands@tlichoc.ca.

In T̄ichq̄ Unity,



Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault
Director of Culture and Lands Protection
T̄ichq̄ Government

October 25, 2024

Via email: femingak@nirb.ca

Francis Emingak
Technical Advisor
Nunavut Environmental Impact Review Board
PO Box 1360
Cambridge Bay, NU X0B 0C0

Grays Bay Road and Port – File no. 24XN038

Dear Mr. Emingak;

The following comments are submitted on behalf of the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB), to be considered during the screening phase of the Grays Bay Road and Port Project, File number 24XN038. The WRRB is responsible for wildlife and wildlife habitat management in Wek'èezhì and must apply the principles and practice of conservation in making its recommendations.

The Board understands the proposed project to be a deep sea port and associated infrastructure, as well as a 230-kilometer all-season road connecting the Grays Bay Port to the former Jericho Mine site in Nunavut. Construction is proposed to take 250-400 workers up to four years from staging to demobilization.

The WRRB notes the proposed Grays Bay Road and Port Project is located within the range of ʔekwò (barren-ground caribou), which are listed as Threatened under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* and assessed as Threatened under the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Specifically, the proposed project occurs within the calving and summer range of the Kòk'èeti Ekwò (Bathurst Caribou) herd, which spends its winters primarily in Wek'èezhì. The Kòk'èeti Ekwò herd has declined substantially over the last three decades, and its herd status was listed as at a “critical low” by the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee in its 2024 Action Plan.

The WRRB broadly has the following concerns:

- Loss to sensitive habitat for ʔekwò from direct disturbance and from reduced use of habitat near infrastructure;
- Direct and indirect impacts to ʔekwò movement from the all-season road, including impacts to their migration patterns and from the barrier effect of the road; and,
- Increased human access causing unsustainable harvest of species at risk.

The proposed Grays Bay Road and Port Project involves major infrastructure and an all-weather road. It is situated in a sensitive area for ᐱᓃᓂᓄᓂ, a species which is assessed as Threatened federally. The project will be the first of its kind in Nunavut and will have transboundary effects into the Northwest Territories through its impact on migratory species such as saᓃ deᓂ'oo (grizzly bear), ᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂ (wolverine), and ᐱᓃᓂᓄᓂ and through its impact on harvesting opportunities. The WRRB believes that due to these factors, there is a likelihood of adverse effects to these species and their habitat from this project if they are not properly mitigated against.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please feel free to contact our office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jody Pellissey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Jody Pellissey
Executive Director

CC Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, Director, ᑕᓄᓂᓄᓂ Government



BEVERLY & QAMANIRJUAQ CARIBOU MANAGEMENT BOARD

29 October 2024

Nunavut Impact Review Board

Attn: Francis Emingak

29 Mitik Street
P.O. Box 1360
Cambridge Bay, NU
X0B 0C0

Dear Francis Emingak,

On behalf of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB), we thank the NIRB for the opportunity to comment on the Gray's Bay Road and Port (GBRP) Project Proposal (NIRB File 24XN038). Our mandate is to safeguard the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds, primarily in the interests of Indigenous peoples and communities across Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba who depend on these herds for sustenance and cultural practices.

As described in the attached comments, the BQCMB has significant concerns regarding the GBRP projects' potential impact on barren-ground caribou, particularly due to the 230-kilometre all-season road which would cross calving and post-calving grounds critical to the Bathurst herd. In addition to disrupting barren-ground caribou during a critical period, increased access to this habitat could lead to intensified harvest pressures, compounding the already dire decline of the Bathurst herd. Existing winter roads in the Northwest Territories have shown that such access increases harvesting pressure on nearby herds, like the Beverly, particularly due to restrictions on Bathurst harvesting. In addition, the proposed infrastructure associated with the GBRP would attract more industrial activity to the region, further exacerbating these concerns.

Given the potential for this project to set a precedent for industrial development in barren-ground caribou calving and post-calving grounds, we strongly urge the NIRB to undertake a full environmental review considering the broader cumulative impacts of such development on barren-caribou populations and on the Indigenous peoples who depend on them for food security and socio-cultural wellbeing. A thorough review process, with dedicated resources for barren-ground caribou range community participation, is essential to ensure the protection of these herds and their habitats.

If you have any questions about these comments, please contact BQCMB Executive Director Tina Giroux-Robillard (tgiroux@arctic-caribou.com) or Biologist Gilly McNaughton (gmnaughton@arctic-caribou.com).

Sincerely,

Tina Giroux-Robillard
BQCMB Executive Director

Attachments (1)



Athabasca Denesųliné Né Né Land Corp.

Athabasca Denesųliné Né Né Land Corporation
Box 23126 South Hill P.O.
Prince Albert SK S6V 8A7
Phone: (306) 953-7287

31 October 2024

Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 1360
Cambridge Bay NU X0B 0C0
Via email: info@nirb.ca

RE: 24XN038 Gray's Bay Road and Port Project Proposal Screening

Dear Francis Emingak and Nunavut Impact Review Board,

The Athabasca Denesųliné NéNé Land Corporation (ADNLC) represents the three Denesųliné Nations of Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, and Hatchet Lake. The Athabasca Denesųliné (AD) have lived in relationship with the Bathurst, Beverly, and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds for thousands of years. These herds are the foundation of AD culture, well-being, food security & sovereignty, and ongoing traditions. We have already experienced the loss of Bathurst Caribou from their traditional wintering range as their population has declined, and we are deeply concerned for the long-term survival of this herd and all barren-ground caribou herds.

We have reviewed the Gray's Bay Road and Port Project Proposal (NIRB file 24XN038) and have serious concerns about the potential impact to the Bathurst Caribou Herd, potential impacts to adjacent herds such as the Beverly/Ahiak, and the potential serious and permanent negative impacts to all the communities who depend on these herds and live in relationship with the herds. We strongly recommend that a full environmental review is required, and that such a review must include consideration of the cumulative impacts of the full project which would include future phases of road connections through Northwest Territories and likely developments and increased human activities on the landscape as a result of this project.

The ADNLC looks forward to working closely with other concerned groups, the NIRB, and proponent as this review moves forward. Please ensure that any and all future communications about this project are sent to Ron Robillard, Chief Negotiator and President of ADNLC rrobillard@adnlc.ca; Danielle Charles, Office Administrator Danielle.charles@adnlc.ca; and Katie Rasmussen, Consulting Biologist katiebeth.rasmussen@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Ron Robillard, Chief Negotiator, Athabasca Denesųliné NéNé Land Corporation
(ADNLC)

COMMENT FORM FOR NIRB SCREENINGS

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) has a mandate to protect the integrity of the ecosystem for the existing and future residents of Nunavut. To assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the project proposal, NIRB would like to hear your concerns, comments and suggestions about the following project proposal application:

| | |
|--|---|
| Project Proposal Title: <u>Grays Bay Road and Port</u> | |
| Proponent: <u>West Kitikmeot Resources Corp.</u> | |
| Location: <u>Kitikmeot</u> | |
| Comments Due By: <u>October 30, 2024</u> | NIRB #: <u>24XN038</u> |
| Indicate your concerns about the project proposal below: | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land |
| <input type="checkbox"/> water quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> terrain | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community involvement and |
| <input type="checkbox"/> consultation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> air quality | <input type="checkbox"/> local development in the area |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> human health issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: harvesting activities by |
| <input type="checkbox"/> any communities who rely on the caribou _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat | |
| _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area | |
| _____ | |
| Please describe the concerns indicated above: | |
| 1. Disturbance to the calving and post-calving grounds, disruption of movement between critical habitats, and loss of/ fragmentation of critical habitats for the Bathurst Caribou | |
| <p>This 230-km long all-season road has the potential to intersect critical calving and post-calving habitats of the Bathurst Herd, as well as movement corridors, potentially including key fresh water crossings. The Bathurst Caribou Herd is already designated as critically low with no signs of recovery to date. Over 98% of the herd has already been lost, and they are on the brink of being lost completely. These habitats have been identified by both western scientific and Indigenous Knowledge to be habitats where caribou are particularly vulnerable and should not be disturbed. The Athabasca Denesųfiné have serious concerns about such a permanent and significant linear structure being placed through such a sacred and critical habitat, and potentially disrupting movements between habitats at times when caribou are most sensitive during post-calving. We have serious concerns that the Bathurst Herd will not survive this development if it were to move forward.</p> | |
| 2. Cumulative impacts of road developments on landscape and human activity | |
| <p>Roads transform landscapes and the human and ecological processes within those landscapes. This proposed all-season road has the potential to completely change access to barren-ground caribou for illegal harvest and potential over-harvest; roads bring disturbance in the form of human activity, noise, dust, invasive species, changes in predator-prey dynamics and inter-species competition and relationships, and new land uses, the cumulative impacts of which all have the potential to negatively</p> | |

affect barren-ground caribou and the rights of harvesters.

3. Cumulative Impacts of all future phases of road

When assessing the long-term cumulative impacts of this project, future road connections must be considered and included in the cumulative effects analysis. This road is not a stand-alone project, and all potential increase in human activity, linear disturbance, future phases of road network connections, and new human disturbances and infrastructure must be considered. In addition, the vulnerability and sensitivity of this landscape and barren-ground caribou herds to climate change must be part of the analysis.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for this application?

Barren-ground caribou herds are declining as cumulative threats to these herds continue to increase. This project has the potential to completely change the landscape and the caribou herds within it. We recommend that the environmental review must consider the following:

- Cumulative impacts of future phases of road connections through NWT and Nunavut
- Cumulative impacts of likely and potential additional human use and development as a result of the construction of this road
- Cumulative Impacts and risk associated with climate change projections for the area
- Potential for pressure to other barren-ground caribou herds such as the Beverly/Ahiak
- A realistic assessment of the long-term recovery or survival of the Bathurst Herd and adjacent herds if this project is implemented
- Given the potential severe risks of this project, Indigenous Governments/Organizations and communities who are potentially impacted must receive sufficient funding to properly assess the potential long-term, intergenerational impacts of this project on all aspects of health, food sovereignty, culture, safety, and community social, economic, spiritual, and cultural well-being for current and future generations.

Given that caribou are central to the well-being, culture, sovereignty, and food security of many Indigenous communities, this review process must center Indigenous Knowledge, perspective, and rights.

Do you support the project proposal? Yes No Any additional comments?

**Name of person
commenting:**

Ron Robillard

of Athabasca Denesuliné Néné Land Corporation (ADNLC)

**Position: President/Chief
Negotiator**

Organization:

Signature:



Date: 31 October 2024



COMMENT FORM FOR NIRB SCREENINGS

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) has a mandate to protect the integrity of the ecosystem for the existing and future residents of Nunavut. To assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the project proposal, NIRB would like to hear your concerns, comments and suggestions about the following project proposal application:

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Project Proposal Title: Grays Bay Road and Port | | | |
| Proponent: West Kitikmeot Resources Corp. | | | |
| Location: Kitikmeot | | | |
| Comments Due By: October 30, 2024 | NIRB #: 24XN038 | | |
| <p>Indicate your concerns about the project proposal below:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns <input type="checkbox"/> water quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> terrain <input type="checkbox"/> air quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities <input type="checkbox"/> community involvement and consultation <input type="checkbox"/> local development in the area <input type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> human health issues <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ _____ _____ </td> </tr> </table> <p>Please describe the concerns indicated above:</p> <p>The Caribou Guardians Coalition (CGC) was created in 2020 by the various Indigenous organizations involved with the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee (BCAC) to create a unified voice and collaboration to help the Bathurst caribou herd populations recover and remain healthy into the future. CGC has representatives from the Tłıchǝ Government, the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKFN) and the NiHatNi Guardians, the North Slave Metis Alliance (NSMA), the NWT Metis Nation, Deninu Kue First Nation (DKFN), Athabasca Denesuline Corporation and the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB). The representatives who have given permission to be included in this submission are listed here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wayne Mercredi, NSMA • Orna Phelan, NSMA • Tyanna Steinwand, Tłıchǝ Government • Petter Jacobsen, Tłıchǝ Government • Sam O'Reilly, DKFN • Amanda Dumond, KRWB • Amos Scott, CGC • Earl Evans, NWT Metis <p>As mentioned in the Grays Bay Road and Port Project – Project Proposal: section 5.5 Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat, “the Project is most likely to regularly interact daily with mainland Bathurst, Dolphin and Union herds.</p> | | <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns <input type="checkbox"/> water quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> terrain <input type="checkbox"/> air quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities <input type="checkbox"/> community involvement and consultation <input type="checkbox"/> local development in the area <input type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> human health issues <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ _____ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no concerns <input type="checkbox"/> water quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> terrain <input type="checkbox"/> air quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wildlife and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> marine mammals and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> birds and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> fish and their habitat <input type="checkbox"/> heritage resources in area | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> traditional uses of land <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit harvesting activities <input type="checkbox"/> community involvement and consultation <input type="checkbox"/> local development in the area <input type="checkbox"/> tourism in the area <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> human health issues <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ _____ _____ | | |



Barren-ground caribou/*tuktuit* of the Bathurst herd are present within the project area from spring (April) to late fall (October), with the herds traditional calving grounds around the Bathurst Inlet/*Kiligiktokmik* and ranges throughout portions of western mainland Nunavut...”

As is mentioned in the proposal, the Bathurst herd has experienced a significant decline in the last number of years, and as such the Government of the Northwest Territories and BCAC members have taken significant measures to help the herd stabilize. The Bathurst Caribou Management Plan has listed the herd status as ‘*Critically Low*,’ as the population is estimated at 6843 animals and there are currently few signs of recovery.

The Bathurst Caribou are simply too vulnerable to risk the construction and operation of an all-season road from the Bathurst Inlet to Contwoyto Lake.

CGC considers this proposed project to likely cause significant adverse impacts to caribou and suggests that the project goes to a full environmental review. The proposed road will likely cause increased stress on caribou from disturbance such as noise, dust, traffic, disruption of seasonal migration and increased human access to the area, in addition to:

1. Disturbance in close proximity to the Bathurst caribou calving grounds,
2. Habitat fragmentation from the road becoming a barrier to caribou migration patterns, including blocking key post-calving migration routes around Contwoyto Lake.
3. Increased predation, as wolves use roads to travel faster and longer distances,
4. Potential for illegal harvest and meat wastage as managing hunters all year access on the road is expensive and difficult,
5. Long term cumulative impacts from potential other mines and spur roads expanding from the proposed all-season road on caribou habitat

In addition, the CGC is concerned about the project’s potential impact on Human Health:

It is within the CGC’s mandate to carry forward Indigenous values in the relationship with caribou. The interconnected relationship between Indigenous peoples who live with the caribou is as much about the quality of harvested food available as it is about the spiritual and mental well-being of people. “Caribou is Happiness,” elder George Tsannie stated at the most recent CGC Gathering held in Wekweèti, September 5-7, 2024. It speaks to the importance of caribou to the wellness of people who live with caribou. Any potential impacts an all-season road will have on caribou will also have an equally devastating impact on human health. Caribou need healthy people, and to be healthy people, we need caribou.

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for this application?

The CGC recommends the Indigenous governments and organizations within the Bathurst Caribou Range be fully consulted if this project reaches the next stage of review. In addition, in considering this project, CGC suggests the NIRB consider the long-term impact this project will have on the survival of barren-ground caribou as a species within this region.

November 22, 2024

To: West Kitikmeot resources and Nunavut Impact Review Board.

With the current research project on Greys Bay Road as a Inuk woman I have some concerns.

As a Inuit beneficiary I write this letter in hopes of cancelling this exploration for the Greys Bay Road Project to prevent harm to our land and animals. As a Inuk, it is very important to maintain the land and animals safe as well as our people. We live and feed off the nature land as fishers and hunters who harvest for country food with the seasons. Please consider this letter carefully and help Inuit by protecting our land from exploration and mining. I think the money could help with Food security and housing in Nunavut instead of building a road. They're are many Inuit who live in over crowded homes and would live to have their own home. There is also many of us who live up north who have to pay very expensive for basic groceries.

Please consider not going through with this project as it will damage the environment and the damage the communities.

Thank You.

Lindsay Anaija

Not In Support

Susie
November 22, 2024

West Kitikmeot Resources, Nunavut Impact Review Board.

Dear WKR and NIRB

As a community Member of Taloyoak, I am not in support of these roads. From Yellowknife to Cambridge Bay. I feel that there is so many negative Impact for this Road. It will cost littering, accidents, and caribous well get sick. 30 million dollars is a lot of money mostly for a Road that won't be using all year round. With that Money, it could help People with housing, food, and renovations for public housing. I am concerned about accidents mostly with intoxicated drivers. Drivers are not always available to be driving long distance either. Please be mindful to Nunavutmiut. Think of more important things. Cause that's a lot of money People are more Important than a Road.

Warm regards,

**Taloyoak Resident
Arctic College Student**

Grays Bay Road Project

I have learned about this “project” about half an hour ago. I have so many concerns as an Inuk woman, who goes fishing and hunting for my source of food for my family. There are a lot of problems I see to this “project”.

I know it will probably be cheaper for foods and other necessities to be delivered to northern communities. I also only see very negatives to this project. When I see roads out there I see no wildlife at all. There are so many possibilities to destruction to the wild life.

Gas and carbon will pollute the air. With this Road I know there will be so many accidents with vehicles and gas and oils leaks. There are so many Inuit with addictions with drugs and alcohol, and having easy access to having to get it from the south.

So having easy access to the city will up the problem. I also fear for human trafficking will be attempted. Look at all the roads you have in the rest of “Canada”. Ruined lands all over. Roads connected to other cities easy for drugs and alcohol all over.

The road that will be built will take gravel, lots of gravel from billions of homes from the smallest insects to the largest Polar bear. It is no fair to ruin land just for the sake of a road. Go and contact someone for the price of food and other necessities to be priced down if you are thinking of the prices of out Nunavut food security.

All the money that will be put into this “project” is a lot! It will be a better benefit to donate the money to housing and food security in Nunavut. We need more housing up here. We have each house with at least 6 people in them with one bathroom. We also need to have water and sewage pump out everyday. The money can be used more useful then just a road. We don’t need a road to destroy the land of the Inuit. Too many ruins already for the land of Nunavut. We don’t need a road to deliver foods and stuff for it to still be expensive.

I hate the idea of it. All of it. I do not support it at all. I am writing from a point where I saw my land got destroyed when they were making a road just for road for a lagoon. The land that once was beautiful, rich with flowers, full of life got destroyed to where there was nothing left, and for what a road. It well take millions of years to repair now. From seconds to destroy.

Please take this into consideration to reconsider and stop the road being build.

Sandy Tungilik.

To: Greys Bay Road and Port Project

I do not agree with the road project because it will be harder on the Animals we live off! We eat! Also it will be easier access to hard drugs and more alcohol! That will effect the younger Generation. And the garbage will destroy our environment, gas/carbon will definitely pollute the land And if bad accidents happen will you have a base in case of emergencies! Also you will destroy our land by using our gravel to build the road! There is so many red flags to this project! I do not support. This is costing millions of dollars that could be going towards, more housing in the Communities, Nutrition North, homeless people!

Sincerely Sandra.