



NIRB File No.: 25YN076

NIRB Public Registry Link: www.nirb.ca/project/126246

NPC File No.: 150949

November 27, 2025

Michelle Blade
 McGill University
 Iqaluit, NU

Sent via email: michelle.blade@mail.mcgill.ca

Re: Notice of Screening and Comment Request

Dear Michelle Blade:

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) received a referral to screen McGill University’s “Assessing changing cryohydrogeologic conditions with locally relevant landscape indicators in Nunavut, Canada” project proposal:

- October 28, 2025, the Nunavut Planning Commission noted that it conforms to the Keewatin Regional Land Use Plan (KRLUP), and
- On October 28, 2025, the NIRB received a complete application and assigned it file number **25YN076** - please reference this file number in all future related correspondence.

The NIRB has commenced screening the project proposal pursuant to the *Nunavut Agreement* and *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*¹ and by copy of this letter, **invites interested parties and municipalities potentially affected by the proposal to comment directly to the Nunavut Impact Review Board.**

SCOPE OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Location	The project covers seven winter overflow sites in the Kivalliq and South Baffin regions, including locations near Arviat, Rankin Inlet, Whale Cove, Coral Harbour, and Iqaluit. Sites are 10–125 km from communities and occur on Municipal, Inuit Owned, and Crown lands
Objective	The proponent aims to assess changing cryohydrogeologic conditions by integrating Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit (IQ) with scientific groundwater and permafrost studies. Expected outcomes include understanding why overflow

¹ Article 12, Sections 12.4.1 and 12.4.4 of the *Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada (Nunavut Agreement)* and s. 87 of the *Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act*, S.C. 2013, c. 14, s. 2 (*NuPPAA*)

	areas form, improving predictions of future overflow hazards, and supporting safer winter travel planning.
Timeline	Field campaigns occur twice per year (Fall and Spring), with sampling also during Winter 2025/26 and Winter 2026/27 if needed.

According to the project proposal, the scope of the project includes the following undertakings, works or activities:

- Travel to the sample sites via snowmobile, ATV, or truck;
- Travel to and from sites will take place when a local community member deems it safe and at times to not disrupt community members or wildlife activities (i.e. caribou);
- Set up trail cameras mounted on wooden posts facing the overflow areas and nearby lakes which will take daily photographs;
- Collect water samples (less than 4L) from overflow water and nearby lakes twice a year, once in the Fall and once in the Spring (not using boats);
- Install small Solinst leveloggers and iButton sensors in the waterbody to record daily water temperature, electrical conductivity, and water level;
- Data collected will improve the understanding of why these overflow areas are occurring, and enhance predictions for decision makers of where additional winter overflow areas may occur;
- Share research results with each community’s Hamlet Office, Hunters and Trappers Organization, and Wildlife Office;
- Clean up all sites at the end of the project, remove all materials taken to the sites.

Inclusion or Exclusion of Scoping List

The NIRB has identified no additional works or activities in relation to the project proposal. As a result, the NIRB will proceed with screening the project based on the scope as described above.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

Documents received and describing the proposal can be accessed from the NIRB’s online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126246 including:

- *Commission Conformity Determination, Questionnaire, and Application*
- *NIRB online Public Application in English, Inuktitut, and French*

The NIRB may request additional information at any time during the process.

By copy of this letter, the NIRB is inviting interested parties and municipalities potentially affected by the project proposal to comment directly to the NIRB by **December 8, 2025**.

The NIRB would like parties to provide comments regarding:

- 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.

Please note that *proposed* project-specific terms and conditions, should the project proceed, have been attached for consideration and comment ([Appendix A](#)).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please send comments to the NIRB via email at info@nirb.ca, via fax at (867) 983-2594 or via the individual project dashboard for this assessment on the NIRB's online public registry at www.nirb.ca/project/126246. Questions should be directed to the undersigned at jtakkirug@nirb.ca.

Sincerely,



Jordan Takkirug
Impact Assessment Officer
Nunavut Impact Review Board

Attachments: Appendix A: *Proposed* Project Specific Terms and Conditions

Enclosures (6): Public Notice of Screening (English, French and Inuktitut)
Comment Forms (English, French and Inuktitut)

cc: Distribution List
Luis Manzo, Kivalliq Inuit Association
Ashley Aupaluktuq-Burton, Kivalliq Inuit Association
Jared Ottenhof, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Chris Spencer, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Conor Goddard, Qikiqtani Inuit Association
Justin Buller, Government of Nunavut
Dianne Lapierre, Government of Nunavut
Natalie D'Souza, Government of Nunavut
Mosha Cote, Nunavut Research Institute
Adrian Paradis, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
Melissa Alexander, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency

Appendix A: Proposed Project Specific Terms and Conditions

The following is a list of project-specific terms and conditions which, should the project proceed, may be recommended to be attached to any approval.

General

1. McGill University (the Proponent) shall maintain a copy of the Project Terms and Conditions at the site of operation at all times and make it accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
2. The Proponent shall operate in accordance with all commitments stated in correspondence provided to the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC File No.: 150949), and the NIRB (Online Application Form, October 28, 2025; Project Summary, October 28, 2025, and Additional Information, October 28, 2025). This information should be accessible to enforcement officers upon request.
3. The Proponent shall operate the site in accordance with all applicable Acts, Regulations and Guidelines.
4. The Proponent shall ensure that it meets the standards and/or limits as set out in the authorizing agencies' permits or licences as required for this project.
5. The Proponent shall ensure that all personnel, staff and contractors are adequately trained prior to commencement of all project activities, and shall be made aware of all operational plans, management plans, guidelines and Proponent commitments relating to the project.

Air Quality

6. The Proponent shall eliminate unnecessary idling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible.

Wildlife – General

7. The Proponent shall not chase, weary, harass or molest wildlife. This includes persistently circling, chasing, hovering over, pursuing or in any other way harass wildlife, or disturbing large groups of animals.
8. The Proponent shall not hunt or fish, unless proper Nunavut authorizations have been acquired.
9. The Proponent shall ensure that all wildlife have the right-of-way on any roads or trails. Vehicles are required to slow down or stop and wait to permit the free and unrestricted movement of wildlife across roads or trails at any location.

Migratory Birds and Raptors Disturbance

10. The Proponent shall carry out all phases of the project in a manner that protects migratory birds and avoids harming, killing or disturbing migratory birds or destroying, disturbing or taking their nests or eggs. In this regard, the Proponent shall take into account Environment and Climate Change Canada's *Avoidance Guidelines*. The Proponent's actions in applying the *Avoidance Guidelines* shall be in compliance with the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and with the *Species at Risk Act*.

11. The Proponent shall not disturb or destroy the nests or eggs of any birds. If active nests of any birds are discovered or located (i.e., with eggs or young), the Proponent shall avoid these areas until nesting is complete and the young have naturally left the vicinity of the nest by establishing a protection buffer zone² appropriate for the species and the surrounding habitat.
12. The Proponent shall avoid the seaward site of seabird colonies and areas used by flocks of migrating waterfowl, a minimum distance away on the recommendation of the appropriate authorizing agencies.
13. The Proponent shall not pursue seabirds or waterbirds swimming on the water surface and shall avoid concentrations of these birds if encountered on the water.

Caribou and Muskoxen Disturbance

14. The Proponent shall avoid interfering with any paths or crossings known to be frequented by caribou during periods of migration as identified by current land use plans in place and/or by Inuit Qaujimaningit.
15. The Proponent shall not locate any operation or undertake activities that could block or cause any diversion to migration of caribou or muskoxen.
16. The Proponent shall immediately cease activities likely to interfere with the migration or calving of caribou or muskoxen until such time as the caribou or muskox have passed.

Road and Ground Disturbance

17. The Proponent shall not move any equipment or vehicles unless the ground surface is in a state capable of fully supporting the equipment or vehicles without rutting or gouging. Overland travel of equipment or vehicles must be suspended if rutting occurs.
18. The Proponent shall not move any equipment or vehicles without prior testing the thickness of the ice to ensure the lake, river or stream is in a state capable of fully supporting the equipment or vehicles.

Land Use and Restoration of Disturbed Areas

19. The Proponent shall use existing trails where possible during project activities on the land.
20. The Proponent shall ensure that the land use area is kept clean and tidy at all times.
21. The Proponent shall avoid disturbance on slopes prone to natural erosion, and alternative locations shall be utilized.
22. The Proponent shall remove all garbage, fuel and equipment at the end of each field season and/or upon completion of work and/or upon abandonment.
23. The Proponent shall ensure that all disturbed areas are restored to a stable or pre-disturbed state using Best Available Technology Economically Achievable (BATEA) upon completion of work and/or abandonment.

Other

² Recommended setback distances to define buffer zones have been established by Environment and Climate Change Canada for different bird groups nesting in tundra habitat and can be found at www.ec.gc.ca/paom-itmb.

24. The Proponent should engage with local residents regarding planned activities in the area and should solicit available Inuit Qaujimaningit and information regarding current recreational and traditional usage of the project area which may inform project activities. Posting of translated public notices and direct engagement with potentially interested groups and individuals prior to undertaking project activities is strongly encouraged.
25. The Proponent shall ensure that project activities do not interfere with Inuit wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities.
26. The Proponent should, to the extent possible, hire local people and access local services where possible.