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June 27, 2013

BY-ELECTRONIC MAIL: info@nirb.ca

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Cape Dorset

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Resolute Bay

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Sanikiluaq

Kelli Gillard
Technical Advisor
Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 1360,
Cambridge Bay, NU
X0A 0B0

Re: Notice of Part 4 Screening for Natural Resources Canada's "Natural Hazards in Baffin Bay" project proposal – NIRB File # 13YN021

Dear Kelli Gillard,

On June 6th 2013, the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) initiated a Part 4 Screening for Natural Resources Canada's "Natural Hazards in Baffin Bay" project proposal and invited interested parties to provide comments. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) Department of Lands and Resources would like to thank the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) for providing the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan or proponent) is currently proposing to conduct a number of different surveys in Baffin Bay utilizing the Canadian Coast Guard vessel the *Hudson* from August 14 to September 17, 2013. The major research goals of the expedition would be to:

1. Investigate earthquake activity in Baffin Bay;
2. Investigate how stable the seabed is in Baffin Bay;
3. Investigate natural leakage of buried oil and gas deposits at the seabed;
4. Understand how the seabed is being changed by ocean currents and by icebergs that drag along the bottom; and,
5. Look for the presence of unique seabed habitats that may be important for fish

Notably, the proponent plans to use varied equipment to conduct the research including: a piston sediment corer, a Seabed camera system, a CTD and Niskin water sampler, a 3.5 kHz echosounder, and a multibeam echosounder

Although the NIRB's standard terms and conditions would undoubtedly be applied should the project proceed we still have the following comments to share to ensure that the environment is protected and that the land users in the region are respected.



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Community Participation & Information Sharing

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QIA is pleased to learn that the proponent is providing opportunities for community participation in the research on-board the *Hudson* however at this time it is unclear how the proponent actually plans to implement this initiative. QIA would like to note that since this project is proposed to take place during the summer months, it would be interesting if the proponent were to put in place a summer student internship program to provide valuable training to some young local Inuit residents. An initiative such as this would help strengthen community buy-in of the research as well as help transfer the information collected during this project back to the community.

QIA is satisfied with the amount of information sharing planned by the proponent in local communities and at various workshops after the conclusion of this research project. We support research that attempts to develop a greater understanding of conditions in our region.

Timing of Activities & Wildlife Concerns

QIA is pleased that the proponent has taken into consideration the Input given to them during community consultations in Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq concerning the use of seismic testing. Natural Resources Canada has agreed to change the project so that no seismic testing will be conducted. Nevertheless, QIA would like to emphasize that the current proposed project still risks having a moderate impact on the local environment, albeit for a short period of time. To reduce possible impacts QIA suggests that the proponent make every effort to schedule their project activities appropriately based on information acquired from consultation with local residents, so as to ensure that project activities will not interfere with Inuit wildlife harvesting or traditional land use activities. In addition, it is important that QIA and local residents are made aware of ongoing project activities at regular intervals.

QIA also requests that the proponent keep a record of all wildlife sightings and mitigative actions taken in a log which can be reported to NIRB along with project results. This will aid in developing a greater understanding of animal populations in the area. Further, this will also help the proponent determine the appropriate level of mitigative measures necessary in subsequent project years aboard the *Hudson*. It is QIA's suggestion that NRCan hire a dedicated Inuit Observer (from one of the nearby communities) aboard the *Hudson* to visually detect possible wildlife impacts.

Finally, QIA requests that the proponent keep a ship log that demonstrates the *Hudson's* physical location throughout the course of the project. This log shall be made available upon the completion of this project to NIRB and interested parties and will aid the proponent to follow up on any complaints it may receive regarding wildlife impacts.



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Conclusion

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Considering the various important goals of this research project, QIA is in support of this project proposal. However, we would appreciate if the NIRB and the proponent consider the suggestions we have raised. Should you require more information about these comments, do not hesitate to contact Joel Fortier, QIA Environmental Assessment Coordinator, at jfortier@qia.ca or (867) 975-8430.

Sincerely,

Bernie MacIsaac
Director of Lands and Resources
Qikiqtani Inuit Association