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Background

The proponent, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), submitted the proposal for the required permits to the Nunavut Water Board and to the Land Manager of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, having deemed that neither the Nunavut Planning Commission (because it did not have an accepted regional land-use plan) nor the Nunavut Impact Review Board (because it did not have jurisdiction over the island) were required to review the project, however is subject to provisions of the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement. As such and because Bear Island is located within the boundaries of the Nunavik Marine Region, INAC concluded that the project must be submitted to the Nunavik Marine Region Impact Review Board for screening. It was further determined that, as set out in section 7.3.5 of the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement, that the project proposal did not need to be reviewed by the Nunavik Marine Region Planning Commission as a land use plan has not yet been approved for the Nunavik Marine Region.

The island is the site of a former Mid-Canada Line radar station, airstrip and related facilities. It is currently uninhabited but is within the "Cree Zone of Interest" as set out in the Eeyou Marine Region Land Claim Agreement initialled in 2009 by Canada and the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) which is currently the subject of a referendum process being undertaken by the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee).

During the course of developing the proposal for remediation of the impacts of the former Mid-Canada Line site at Bear Island, INAC presented the project to the communities of Chisasibi, Wemindji and Waskaganish, who did not express concerns over the proposal. In fact, much of the on-site work will be undertaken by a Cree company from Wemindji called "Wiinibeck", that has an agreement with the primary contractor, "Biogenie", for a sub-contract. The involvement of a local company that will engage local workers, along with the possibility of significant training benefits for those workers is an aspect of this project that is attractive to the Cree community and in the view of the members of the NMRIRB is consistent with the principles of the Board's mandate.

Mr. Mark Yetman, Contaminated Sites Project Manager from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, presented a detailed overview of the proposal to the members of the NMRIRB on December 16, 2009. He also made available to the members the studies that were done in the course of developing this proposal.

INAC carried out an initial environmental screening assessment (published March 2008) and an archaeological impact assessment (published March 2008). The screening revealed limited presence of toxic materials (to be transported off the island) and considerable non-toxic refuse requiring containment and burial on the island. The archaeological survey recorded three sites of interest (a tent ring, an Inuksuk and a wooden shipwreck) none of which will be touched by the

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proposed work. Based on these, the proponent developed the proposal for the clean-up and decontamination of the island.

The original proposal was to undertake the project in 2009, but it has now been delayed by one year. If the staging of the project begins soon it will be undertaken in 2010. We ask that in your letter to the proponent that you require that a final report on the outcomes of this work be sent to the NMRIRB.

In conclusion please be advised that the NMRIRB deems the clean-up of Bear Island proceed in 2010 and urges that all steps, including allocation of the required funding, proceed immediately.

I thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely Yours,



Putulik Papigatuk
Interim Chairman of the
Nunavik Marine Region Impact Review Board

Cc: Mark Yetman, INAC
James Yantha, INAC