

Ministre des Affaires autochtones
et du développement du Nord



Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and
Northern Development

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H4

DEC 17 2012



Ms. Elizabeth Copland
Chairperson
Nunavut Impact Review Board
PO Box 1360
CAMBRIDGE BAY NU X0B 0C0

By facsimile: 1-867-983-2594

Dear Ms. Copland:

Thank you for your letter of September 25, 2012, regarding the Screening Decision Report for Sabina Gold & Silver Corp.'s Back River Project Proposal. As per the Report, the Nunavut Impact Review Board has determined that the Proposal may have significant adverse effects on the ecosystem, wildlife habitat or Inuit harvesting activities; may have significant adverse socio-economic effects on Northerners; and will cause significant public concern. Hence, the Nunavut Impact Review Board has determined, pursuant to Section 12.4.4(b) of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, that the Back River Project Proposal requires review under Part 5 or 6 of Article 12.

I, along with the Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Natural Resources Canada, and Transport Canada, have jurisdictional responsibility for authorizing the Proposal to proceed. The Responsible Ministers have reviewed the Board's Report and, after taking into consideration the nature and scale of the Proposal, concur that a Part 5 review is required. I am therefore referring the Back River Proposal to the Nunavut Impact Review Board for a review under Part 5, Article 12 of the Agreement.

As the Board notes in its Report, there are a number of issues relating to the Proposal that require further consideration. Pursuant to section 12.5.1 of the Agreement, the Responsible Ministers would like to identify two issues of particular concern for the Board to consider.

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Transboundary Impacts

Given the Proposal's close proximity to the Bathurst caribou calving ground, it is essential that the scope of the Board's review also include consideration of transboundary impacts upon affected communities and groups who depend upon this resource. I therefore suggest that the Board pay particular attention to encouraging the participation of these groups in the review so that the potential impacts and proposed mitigation measures can be thoroughly understood.

Potential Cumulative Effects

The Back River Project Proposal is one of many proposed and/or existing mines in the Kitikmeot Region. A thorough cumulative impacts assessment will be very important for the review. However, when assessing these impacts, I urge the Board to consider the Proposal in combination with reasonably foreseeable mine and transportation infrastructure developments.

In regard to the availability of participant funding, the Board indicated in its Report that participant funding is required to promote effective participation by potentially affected groups in the review. While funding has been provided for a limited number of complex projects on a case-by-case basis for previous Part 5 reviews, there is no established participant funding program for impact assessments in Nunavut. In the current fiscal environment, I am unable to provide participant funding for the review of the Back River Project Proposal. I am confident that the Board's Part 5 review process will provide sufficient and meaningful opportunities for potentially affected groups to participate in the review.

I appreciate the work that the Nunavut Impact Review Board has done in screening the Proposal and I look forward to receiving your Final Hearing Report upon completion of the review.

Sincerely,



John Duncan, PC, MP

c.c.: The Honourable Denis Lebel, PC, MP
The Honourable Keith Ashfield, PC, MP
The Honourable Joe Oliver, PC, MP
The Honourable Peter Kent, PC, MP