

Nunavut uranium proposal won't undergo federal review

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A uranium mine being proposed in Nunavut will not be subject to a federal environmental assessment, but instead be reviewed by a territorial regulator.

The Nunavut Impact Review Board will lead what is known as a Part Five review of Areva Resources Canada Inc.'s bid to develop an open-pit and underground uranium mine at its Kiggavik site, 80 kilometres west of Baker Lake.

Part Five refers to a clause in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement that gives the territorial review board the authority to assess projects.

Federal Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl recommended the Part Five review over the other option, a Part Six review, which would have required a federal environment assessment panel.

"All of the environmental assessments carried out in Nunavut have been Part Fives, so the system is well used to that type of review," Barry McCallum, Areva's manager of Nunavut affairs, told CBC News.

"A Part Six would have been the first one and would likely have growing pains."

More thorough review?

For a Part Six review to be triggered, Areva's proposal would have had to meet certain criteria under Article 12, a section of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement that deals with development impact.

Strahl would have had to deem the proposal as a transboundary issue or a matter of important national interest.

Ryan Barry, the Nunavut Impact Review Board's technical director, said a Part Six review would likely take longer to do, but he disagreed with suggestions that a federal panel would have conducted a more thorough assessment.

"I don't have reason to believe that a Part Six review would be any more in-depth than the regular reviews that the board currently runs," Barry said.

Barry added that the review process is just getting started, and the review board is taking public concerns with Areva's proposal very seriously.

"We do this for all of our reviews, and we have even further emphasis and direction from the minister in this case ... highlighting the importance of ensuring adequate public participation, meaningful participation," he said.

Public consultations for the Part Five review will begin as soon as possible, Barry said.

In the meantime, Areva's McCallum said the company is continuing to work on an environmental impact

statement and feasibility report for the project.

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at 6:08 PM ETWow!!!

The Federal government actually deciding that the local government is more competent to decide rather than being powerhungry elitists. I am used to the Federal government singing Bonhomme Bonhomme as they push their way upon us all. You know: "Tu n'est pas maitre dans ta maison, comme nous y sommes" If this is a general precedent it could be very good news for the other provinces (yes I know Nunavut is not exactly like the provinces) and the rights of people in all of the regions of Canada outside the First Circle of Hull

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