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NEWS: Nunavut January 21, 2010 - 2:39 pm

Uravan, NIRB butt heads over uranium projects Feds order cleanup of Sandy Lake exploration site

GABRIEL ZÁRATE

Uravan Minerals, a company now exploring for uranium near Baker Lake, may restart the entire regulatory application process rather than meet its current obligations, which include a complete environmental impact statement requested by the Nunavut Impact Review Board.

Uravan's CEO, Larry Lahusen, sald in a statement that the company hopes that the next time around, the NIRB may recommend less stringent requirements.

Uravan's project at Garry Lake has been subject to unusually high levels of government scrutiny because of the potential environmental impact. The project lies within the calving grounds of

A map detail shows the location of Uravan Minerals' Garry Lake uranium deposit. The company argues an environmental review ordered by the Nunavut Impact Review. Board could make the project unprofitable and may start the regulatory process over. (PHOTO BY CHRIS WINDEYER)

the Beverly-Qamanirjuag caribou herd, which may already be suffering a serious population decline.

So in June of 2008, the review board recommended a full environmental impact statement for Uravan's Garry Lake project. An EIS is a big job that's usually only for a full-blown mine, not a small exploration project.

The review board's recommendations go to the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, which issues such land use permits.

In his September 2008 approval of the Garry Lake project, northern affairs minister Chuck Strahl responded by recommending a "thorough, yet expeditious review of the project."

Lahusen says his company takes the position that the review board's request for an EIS goes beyond Strahi's "thorough yet expeditious" criteria. Uravan then asked the review board to clarify what they want to see covered in an environmental impact statement.

The review board asked for an investigation of possible effects on caribou, but also on predators, migratory birds, people, as well as the land, water and air.

The review board also wants the company to consider exploration, site preparation, transportation, the storage of hazardous materials, water and waste management.

Uravan responded by saying the review board's demands are too onerous and impose an unfair financial burden on the company

In April 2009, the company asked NIRB for advice on how to meet its requirements and threatened to abandon the project. NIRB responded in November, asking Uravan what its next move would be.

Because of the deadlock between Uravan, INAC and the NIRB, Uravan didn't get the proper licenses for its ploject near Sand Lake.

The company moved its fuel and supplies to Sand Lake because of flooding at a previous location.

In August 2009, an inspector from INAC visited Sand Lake and found that possibly 1,000 litres of diesel had leaked into the soil. His department ordered a cleanup by Sept. 30, 2009, then extended that deadline to May 15, 2010

Uravan says the May 15 deadline is impossible because by the ground will still be frozen and

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covered in snow.

Also, the area is protected from development activities between May 15 and July 15 because it's the caribou calving season. So Uravan's lefter to INAC says the work can't even start until then anyway

Nunavummiut Makitagunarningit, a citizens' group skeptical of uranium mining, has slammed Uravan for ignoring cleanup deadlines and INAC for extending them.

"It is our view that it is time to take elevated enforcement action against Uravan for its numerous alleged breaches of the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act, as well as its circumvention of the Impact review process," reads a Dec. 22 letter from Nunavummiut Makitagunamingit chair Sandra Inutiq to INAC.

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(3) Comments:

#1. Posted by boatie on January 21, 2010

Hopefully ur-a-van will find somewhere else to look for hazardous minerals with radioactive by-products. Hmm, preferably not in an area used by hundreds of thousands of caribou next time?

Mr. Lahusen, take a hint from NIRB. Even if you hit it big. Garry Lake will probably NEVER be a mine. Stop wasting everyone's time and just drop the property please. Thanks.

#2. Posted by Hunter on January 22, 2010

We do not need your kind. Please pack up, clean up your mess and get out of our territory.

#3. Posted by Throbbin on January 22, 2010

Good job NIRB

I'd say that the "possible effects on caribou, but also on predators, migratory birds, people, as well as the land, water and air" outweighs the bottom line of a Corporation from Calgary.

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