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## Uravan given extension on cleanup

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QAMANITTUAQ/BAKER LAKE - Nunavut's new mining watchdog group says a uranium company in the territory should be charged for lacking proper permitting and failing to clean up a camp near Baker Lake.

"They've been operating an illegal site for a very long time," Nunavummiut Makitagunarningit board member Laura Bowman said. "It's time for charges to be laid."

Uravan Minerals Inc. was found in violation of the Nunavut Water and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act after the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs conducted an inspection at Uravan's Sand Lake site last August, according to a report filed that month.

The Sand Lake site is being used for Uravan's Garry Lake project.

Inspector Andrew Keim found leaking fuel barrels, garbage and construction materials that had been left at the site since 2008. Approximately 1,000 litres of fuel had leaked from 13 of the barrels, none of which was stored in a secondary containment area. The company was also using the site without a water licence or a land use permit.

Keim ordered Uravan to clean up the site by September 30, 2009. A report was to be sent to INAC by Oct. 1 when the cleanup was finished.

In e-mail correspondence with Keim in August, Uravan CEO Larry Lahusen requested a temporary land use permit to store fuel at Sand Lake.

"As Uravan Minerals does not have a Land Use Permit for this site already, it is my understanding that your request for a temporary storage license is not one that can be given," Keim wrote in response on August 18.

According to INAC's director of operations Bernie MacIsaac, Uravan had been using another site near Garry Lake with proper permitting, but the location was prone to flooding so the company moved to Sand Lake.

Uravan had applied for a land use permit for Sand Lake, but INAC could not provide a permit to Uravan until the company completed the environmental impact statement requested by the Nunavut Impact Review Board. The impact review board had requested such a statement for the Garry Lake project from Uravan in February 2009, according to Ryan Barry, technical director at NIRB.

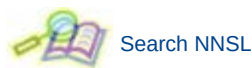
"We could not issue a permit subject to that review by NIRB. That is how they ended up on that site without a permit," MacIsaac said. "They had applied for it and I presume they were anticipating they were going to get it."

Uravan is meeting with environmental consultants about how much completing the assessment will

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cost and how long it will take, according to a letter sent to the Nunavut Impact Review Board from Uravan CEO Larry Lahusen in November.

In e-mail correspondence with Keim on Sept. 14, Lahusen admitted violating the Nunavut Water and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act, but said the Sept. 30 cleanup deadline wasn't feasible.

"We admit we have gone outside the lines of the act but not with any malicious or flagrant intent," Lahusen wrote.

Lahusen stated weather and safety of contract workers as reasons for the delay in cleaning up the site.

On Dec. 15, INAC granted Uravan's request to extend the cleanup deadline. MacIsaac said Uravan had fixed fuel leaks and placed fuel barrels in secondary containment areas.

"We felt it was justified and they stabilized the site so there is no threat to the environment," he said.

MacIsaac said the deadline has been extended until May of next year.

"For various reasons, including weather, they weren't able to get it all finished," MacIsaac said. "However, they did undertake to have it all finished by May 2010."

Nunavummiut Makitagunarningit's Bowman said Uravan's actions could set a precedent for other mining operations in the territory.

"If a company can ignore the entire process and not be charged with anything, then why would any company comply?" she said. "How can people in Nunavut trust that a uranium mine will ever be operated safely and in compliance with federal and territorial laws if a company is obviously ignoring those laws and nothing happens to them?"

Nunavummiut Makitagunarningit has sent a letter of complaint to Keim in response to INAC's decision.

Lahusen did not return calls from Nunavut News/North as of press time.

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