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Naval facility receives its water licence

Water board greenlights National Defence's Nanisivik plans despite concerns

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IKPIARJUK/ARCTIC BAY

Despite concerns about a risk of dredging up environmentally dangerous zinc waste deposits and getting in the way of the CanZinco mine cleanup, the Nunavut Water Board has said the Department of National Defence (DND) can go ahead with plans for the Nanisivik Naval Facility.

"CanZinco is concerned that construction and operation of the Nanisivik Naval Facility has the potential to disturb a number of reclaimed mine components that overlap with the project footprint identified by DND," Johan Skoglund of CanZinco/Nyrstar wrote in a July 25 letter to the Nunavut Water Board. "There are also areas actively undergoing reclamation that could also be affected."

The base, a berthing and refuelling station for the new Arctic offshore patrol ships as well as navy and other government vessels, is being prepared for construction to start in 2015. The naval facility is expected to start operations in 2018.

CanZinco continues its efforts to repatriate the site, and states that the naval facility will be built "in an area where significant industrial activity took place for over 25 years, and during which a number of localized areas of contamination were generated or waste deposited," according to the letter.

Skoglund raises a red flag over the lack of information in the project proposal relating to the location of CanZinco's waste deposit sites.

"Without a good understanding of the unique characteristics and history of the mine site, an outside party might view these covers as a convenient source of aggregate for construction and by excavating into them, unknowingly compromising the thermal characteristics of the cover and expose contaminated materials to the environment," he stated in the letter.

He suggests that the water board require the Department of National Defence to identify all locations that need to be excluded from site work. This includes some locations that are currently being developed for soil reclamation. He states that

CanZinco is willing to work with the government to share the company's knowledge of the site.

The Nanisivik Naval Facility was first brought to the water board in October 2008, but the application was rejected as deficient. In April of this year, Defence Construction Canada came back to the board requesting approval to use water and deposit waste without a licence. This, too, was rejected, and the board said the project required a Type B licence. The June 2014 application was approved Nov. 4.

The licence gives Defence Construction Canada, acting for DND, approval to build a bulk-liquid storage facility with a lined containment area for 7.5 million litres of naval distillate, 100,000 litres of diesel fuel, 3,000 litres of aviation fuel and 10,000 litres of oily wastewater.

The licence assumes the project scope will include a deep-water berthing and refuelling facility, support buildings, pipelines, a temporary camp for 50 to 60 people, roads and culverts, quarry development, cargo staging and marshalling areas, and the use of water for "domestic purposes, hydrostatic testing, concrete production, aggregate compaction and dust control," the approval letter, signed by water board chairperson Thomas Kabloona, states.

The licence also requires DND to inform the board of any overlaps with the CanZinco site.

The facility, located approximately 30 kilometres southeast of Arctic Bay, was first announced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in August 2007. Since then, the project, with a 2013 cost estimate of \$116 million, has been hampered by delays.

In 2012, the project was dramatically scaled back from a permanent site for office, accommodation and industrial space to one unheated storage building with minimal staffing. Nunavut News/North reported then the project plans to store only one season's worth of fuel, half of the amount originally planned.



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