



## Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board

19 August 2015

The Honourable Bernard Valcourt  
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development  
10 Wellington, 21<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4

Sent via e-mail: [bernard.valcourt@parl.gc.ca](mailto:bernard.valcourt@parl.gc.ca); [minister@aandc.gc.ca](mailto:minister@aandc.gc.ca)

Dear Mr. Valcourt:

### **NIRB Final Hearing Report for the Review of AREVA's Proposed Kiggavik Uranium Mine Project (NIRB File No. 09MN003)**

On behalf of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB), I am writing to indicate our support for the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB)'s conclusion submitted to you and associated responsible Ministers in their Final Hearing Report on the Kiggavik Uranium Mine Project proposed by AREVA Resources Canada (AREVA). The BQCMB disagrees with AREVA's contention that you should reject the NIRB's Final Hearing Report and recommendations, as AREVA described in their letter to you on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015.

The BQCMB is a caribou co-management board that operates through collaboration between traditional caribou-using communities and five governments (Canada, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Saskatchewan). Inuit, Dene, and Metis Board members representing the caribou-using communities of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds in two territories and two provinces are deeply concerned about both the ecological effects of human land use activities on barren-ground caribou and their habitat and the long-term impacts these activities will have on the sustainability of traditional lifestyles and livelihoods for their communities.

The BQCMB has been a fully engaged participant in all stages of the NIRB's screening and review processes for the Kiggavik project proposal, partially as a result of Participant Funding provided by your department. The Board's goal through this participation has been to help the NIRB to: a) assess the potential impacts of this proposed project on caribou, caribou habitat and caribou harvesters; b) evaluate measures available to mitigate negative project effects and cumulative effects on the caribou herds and their habitats; and c) decide whether the Project's potential impacts are significant and, if so, what terms and conditions should be included in any project certificate. The attached detailed comments are provided to support the NIRB's recommendation that "the Project should not proceed at this time".

In asking you and associated responsible Ministers to accept the NIRB's recommendation to not approve the AREVA project at this time, the BQCMB is also supporting the positions presented to you in recent submissions by the Baker Lake Hunter's and Trapper's Organization, the Kivalliq Wildlife Board and MiningWatch Canada.

If you have any questions about these comments, please contact the BQCMB Executive Director, Ross Thompson, at [rossthompson@mymts.net](mailto:rossthompson@mymts.net).

Sincerely,



Earl Evans  
BQCMB Chairperson

Attachment

- cc. Elizabeth Copland, Chairperson, Nunavut Impact Review Board
- Peter Taptuna, Premier, Government of Nunavut
- Leona Aglukkaq, Member of Parliament, Nunavut
- Cathy Towtongie, President, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
- David Ningeongan, President, Kivalliq Inuit Association
- Johnny Mike, Minister, Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut
- Richard Aksawnee, Chairperson, Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization
- Stanley Adjuk, Chairperson, Kivalliq Wildlife Board
- Ugo Lapointe, Canada Program Coordinator, MiningWatch Canada
- Vincent Martin, President and C.E.O., AREVA Resources Canada

**Attachment. The BQCMB Perspective on AREVA’s Position concerning the NIRB Final Hearing Report**

The BQCMB disagrees with statements made by AREVA in their July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015 letter to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development as described below. We have drawn from BQCMB technical comments on AREVA’s Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed Kiggavik Project, which were submitted to the NIRB in January 2015.

<b>Statement by AREVA</b>	<b>BQCMB Response</b>
<p>1. The NIRB denied Project approval “in the absence of significant unresolvable issues”</p> <p>and</p> <p>“there are no project-specific issues that cannot be addressed in Project Certificate terms and conditions”</p>	<p>The BQCMB indicated to the NIRB in our technical comments on the FEIS that, should the Kiggavik Project proceed, residual cumulative effects on caribou would likely reduce sustainability of one or more caribou herds given: a) the uncertain declining trend of the herds, b) increased mortality especially from harvesting, c) increasing cumulative effects from induced development and d) insufficient capacity of agencies to conduct the level of regional monitoring required to identify appropriate mitigation, particularly as induced development creates increasing demands on limited capacity.</p> <p>These are significant unresolvable issues that cannot be addressed in Project Certificate terms and conditions because: i) the situation of declining caribou herds must be managed by the Government of Nunavut, ii) induced development is probable once access to the area is facilitated by AREVA’s roads and airstrip which will add to cumulative effects, and iii) limited agency capacity is a Nunavut-wide situation that is not under the control of the NIRB or AREVA (but which might be partially addressed through a collaborative regional terrestrial cumulative effects framework under the Nunavut General Monitoring Program as we recommended).</p>
<p>2. The NIRB “emphasized potential short-term negative socio-economic effects from the Project” and did not adequately consider “positive, long-term benefits associated with the opportunity to participate in the wage economy”.</p>	<p>This statement by AREVA implies that the only negative socio-economic effects from the Project would be short-term and that participation in the wage economy is the desired and best situation for all Nunavummiut. In contrast, there is strong concern among the traditional caribou-using peoples from across the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges that the reduction and loss of traditional values and knowledge, which AREVA predicted in its FEIS, would be highly probable should the Kiggavik Project proceed.</p> <p>The BQCMB understands that the NIRB considered all input received, especially input from Inuit, and made their decision based on the evidence presented to them in the interest of protecting the biophysical and socio-economic environments for the well-being of Nunavummiut, according to the Board’s mandate.</p>

<p>3. “a positive EA decision would demonstrate a stable and predictable regulatory process . . . while at all times remaining protective of the biophysical and socio-economic environments”</p>	<p>In contrast to AREVA’s view, the BQCMB’s perspective is that a positive EA decision would have demonstrated that proposed projects might all be approved regardless of their potential effects on the biophysical and socio-economic environments. Instead the NIRB has given sufficient weight to the input provided throughout the review process by traditional caribou-using peoples when evaluating AREVA’s conclusions about significance of effects on caribou and acknowledged effects on traditional cultures (i.e., likely reduction and possible loss of traditional values and knowledge).</p>
<p>4. “uncertainty of start date . . . was the primary influence in the NIRB recommendation to not approve the Project”</p>	<p>Recent market analysis indicates that uranium development may occur even later than expressed by AREVA in NIRB's review. This economic parameter accentuates points made by the BQCMB and many others that the NIRB's decision should be upheld because any protracted start-up would negate most if not all of the contemporary environmental impact analysis conducted on the project proposal.</p> <p>Our understanding of the situation is that various sources of uncertainty formed the basis for the NIRB’s recommendation “to not approve the Project at this time”. The uncertainty of start date was a major over-arching factor that intensified the effects of all the other uncertainties associated with more specific aspects of the proposed project, however, the uncertainty of start date was not the primary basis for the NIRB’s recommendation.</p> <p>Uncertainties associated with the proposed project included those related to effects and cumulative effects on caribou. A high degree of uncertainty was identified by the BQCMB in the assessment of incremental effects for caribou mortality, habitat loss and caribou movements. There was also substantial uncertainty and concern about long-term safety of caribou as food for maintaining traditional cultures for Nunavut’s Inuit as well as for Denesuline communities. The level of uncertainty in the assessment led the BQCMB to conclude that, should the Kiggavik Project proceed, cumulative effects on caribou would be significant and there would be effects on Nunavummiut caribou harvesters as well as transboundary effects on Qamanirjuaq caribou harvesters outside Nunavut.</p>
<p>5. AREVA “points to . . . the NLCA as ensuring that there is an adequate system of monitoring and adapting to ensure the Project has no significant adverse environmental effect throughout its project life”</p>	<p>It is the BQCMB’s view that if agencies lack adequate capacity to monitor and mitigate with sufficient precision to detect Kiggavik effects and monitoring and mitigation are not linked closely enough to adaptive management, then mitigation will not be adjusted over time as required to protect caribou and their habitat, and significant adverse effects will likely occur. There is, therefore, a high level of uncertainty because the system required for ensuring the Project has no significant adverse environmental effects is not in place.</p>

	<p>Examples of the Government of Nunavut's limited capacity are the current delay in release of the results of the June 2014 population survey for the Qamanirjuaq caribou herd, and the 29-month period required for release of the June 2008 Qamanirjuaq survey results.</p>
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The BQCMB is dependent on receiving information about the caribou herds from governments and does not have other means of obtaining this information.

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