

Minister rejects Baffinland's request for emergency order

Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal 'will continue to work with partners'

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Baffinland will not be granted permission to produce more ore from its Mary River mine in Nunavut.

The federal Department of Northern Affairs confirmed in an email Thursday that Minister Daniel Vandal will not issue an emergency order to allow the additional ore production.

Ryan Cotter, Vandal's director of communications, wrote that Vandal encouraged Baffinland to go through the Nunavut Impact Review Board instead.

Baffinland had asked in May for the order to allow it to truck and ship six million tonnes of iron ore for the rest of 2022. The company had been given temporary approval to up its production from 4.2 million tonnes to six million tonnes in 2018, but that approval expired at the end of 2021.

Baffinland issued a written statement, noting that "the Minister has proposed that the Minister, the [Qikiqtani Inuit Association] and Baffinland meet together to finalize the plan to make the project viable for 2022 and into the foreseeable future."

"We expect to hold these discussions as soon as possible and to rapidly address all issues for the benefit of all stakeholders."

That differs slightly from an earlier statement posted to Twitter Wednesday night, which said the company expected to hold those discussions Thursday.

A spokesperson declined to comment further.

The updated statement also says the company's goal for these meetings is to reach a "mutually beneficial agreement" so that the company can keep transporting six million tonnes of iron ore for the rest of the year.

Baffinland said last week it would need to lay off more than 1,300 workers if it didn't receive the emergency approval.

David Akeeagok, minister of environment and minister of economic development and transportation, said Thursday that the government is preparing in the event of layoffs.

That includes working with Service Canada, Family Services, as well as career development, and other affected departments, he said.

"That's in very early discussions ... if it does happen, we will seriously want to make sure that all the programs that are available for people that are being laid off are exhausted," he said.

"Those are the real things that are taking place."

Akeeagok said he has not spoken with Baffinland since the emergency order was denied.