

Office of Environmental Health Assessment Services
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August 28, 2003

Ms Stephanie Briscoe
Executive Director
Nunavut Impact Review Board
P.O. Box 2379
Cambridge Bay, Nunavut X0E 0C0

Ms Stephanie Critch
Fish Habitat Management
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
P.O. Box 358
Iqaluit, Nunavut X0A 0H0

Subject: Health Canada Response to Meadowbank Gold project description

Dear Ms Briscoe and Ms Critch,

At your request, Health Canada has reviewed the project description for the above mentioned project. We have a number of comments on this project proposal, especially with respect to human health.

First of all, Health Canada is providing input to this assessment as a federal authority under CEAA. However, we do not have any approvals, permits or licenses to issue for this project. Therefore, Health Canada should be removed from the Table 1.1 of the report.

Secondly, given the importance of well-being and health to NIRB and the public generally, human health should be included as a valued socioeconomic component of this project. Health is of key importance, and is intimately connected with other valued components. Within this EA, health should be defined according to the WHO definition of health,

“a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease”.

Throughout this EA, the linkages between the environment and human health need to be recognized and assessed. To be more specific, wherever potential effects to air, water, soil or food are identified, the potential pathways to human receptors need to be identified, and the possible human health effects need to be assessed. This is especially important where the effect identified in Table 6.3 is “toxic contamination in the food chain”. Any health effects due to consumption of such foods need to be quantitatively assessed, based on actual resource consumption, and detailed according to species consumed and parts of animals or fish consumed. This type of health assessment is also needed where table 6.4 identifies the possible effect of “changes in fish tissue quality”.

Another important area where health must be considered is where the identified effect, as outlined by table 6.4, is “changes to water quality”. It must be determined if the water is a source of potable water, and ensure that the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines are followed. Possible health effects associated with changes to drinking water quality should be quantitatively assessed.

Also, the assessment of this project needs to include a full examination of potential health effects to workers associated with the project, including air quality and noise effects to workers in the open pit and underground mines.

Furthermore, this EA needs to examine the health effects associated with the socioeconomic implications of the project, in particular, boom and bust effects associated with the short lifespan of the mine.

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me Dunn at (613) 948-2875.

Sincerely yours,

Carolyn Dunn
EA Officer

cc Atis Lasis, HC Ontario/Nunavut region