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Affairs Canada  
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Nunavut Regional Office  
P.O. Box 100, Bldg 918  
Iqaluit, NU, X0A 0H0

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03MN107

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5510-5-3

02 December 2005

Stephanie Briscoe  
Nunavut Impact Review Board  
P.O. Box 1360  
Cambridge Bay, NU  
X0B 0C0

Dear Ms. Briscoe,

**RE: Meadowbank Gold Project - Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Conformity and Final Hearing Schedule**

On behalf of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Transport Canada (TC), Health Canada (HC) and Environment Canada (EC), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) would like to thank you for your letter of November 28, 2005 in which you invite parties to comment on timing of the review process and Final Hearing and on Cumberland Resources Ltd.'s (herein to referred as Cumberland) suggestions to compress the review time schedule. The federal authorities met on December 01, 2005 to discuss the proponent's proposal.

The federal authorities appreciate the concerns raised by Cumberland in regards to the short season available for mobilization and construction in the Eastern Arctic and the potential for Cumberland to miss their window for mobilization should the environmental assessment process be prolonged. Collectively, the federal parties agree with the Nunavut Impact Review Board's (NIRB) schedule for a 115 days review period. All federal parties are committed to providing the best possible advice to NIRB and believe that the proposed compressed timelines may not allow sufficient time to all interveners to adequately review Cumberland's information. Given the workload constraints and capacity limitation of the various departments also involved with the review of other northern project reviews such as the Mackenzie Gas Project and Doris North Project, the proposed compressed timeline may compromise these departments' experts availability and prevent timely input into the Meadowbank review.

Finally, the federal agencies identified above would like to recommend to NIRB that, should a compressed time schedule be accepted, the technical review should only start once a complete and positively conforming FEIS is presented. If the technical review begins after Cumberland's FEIS receives a positive conformity from NIRB, the federal agencies would be agreeable to a 90 day technical review period to allow for better use of federal experts' effort and a more comprehensive review of the Meadowbank project.

**Canada**

The federal parties are committed to providing quality expert advice and look forward to working with NIRB and the proponent on the review of the Meadowbank Gold Project. Should you have questions or need clarification, please do not hesitate to me on behalf of the federal authorities involved with this response.

Sincerely,

***Original signed by***

Robyn Abernethy-Gillis  
Manager, Environment

cc  
Colette Spagnuolo, EC  
Iannick Lamirande, NRCan  
Doug Soloway, TC  
Derrick Moggy, DFO  
Carolyn Dunn, HC