



March 8, 2005

File No. **03MN107**

Mr. Craig Goodings
Environmental Manager
Cumberland Resources
#950, One Bentall Centre
Box 72, 505 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC V7X 1M4

Via email: cgoodings@cumberlandresources.com

Dear Mr. Goodings:

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB or Board) has obtained a news release from Cumberland Resource Ltd.'s website (<http://www.cumberlandresources.com/news/NR05-02.pdf>) entitled "Cumberland Releases Feasibility Study Results on the Meadowbank Gold Project", dated February 24, 2005. This news release announces results from the Meadowbank Feasibility Study with changes to the mine design including increased annual production, changes to open pit scheduling and the construction of a 102 km all-weather access road from Baker Lake to the project site rather than a winter road.

These modifications to the project design may result in significant changes to the assessment of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) including, but not limited to such sections as the following:

- Water quality impacts resulting from changes to tailings deposition and from stream crossings along an all weather road;
- Site Water Balance and Energy Balance from increased mill throughput;
- Wildlife and caribou migration impacts resulting from an all weather road;
- Air quality impacts as a result of increased mill throughput and possible quarrying activities necessary for all weather road construction as well as road use; and
- Cumulative impacts.

The Board is in receipt of a letter from Environment Canada dated March 2, 2005, expressing their concern that changes to the project design may affect the assessment of the draft EIS and the review process. Environment Canada's letter infers that a delay at least in the technical review may be appropriate.

Environment Canada's concerns are reflected in several other parties' comments on conformity. For example, the GN Department of Environment raised the road access/all-weather issue (along with several other matters); DFO raised the potential "significant changes to the mine design" from the February 24, 2005 Feasibility Study; Health Canada raised several issues of non-conformity; DIAND's letter of March 3, 2005 pointed out that their department "is still awaiting [tenure applications] for site access . . . " DIAND also points to several missing documents and plans, including:

- Human Resources
- Education and Orientation
- Marine Shipping
- Public Involvement
- Environmental Management Plan

The Board notes that the first item mentioned by DIAND, the Human Resources Report supporting the draft EIS has not been submitted as specifically requested during a meeting with Cumberland Resources held in Cambridge Bay on February 9th, 2005, now over three weeks ago.

Based on all the above, the Board is considering suspending the Technical Review until the missing Reports, and your pending detailed response are filed with NIRB *vis a vis* the Feasibility Study's implication on project design changes to the draft EIS. Based on this process, and once in receipt of all of the above mentioned documents, the Board can properly evaluate the contents of those documents and consider at that point not only the new deadline for Technical Review, but also, how to proceed further at that point.

However, *before* making the decision to suspend the technical review, the Board would like you to respond to this potential decision, taking into account the parties' concerns with the changes to the project and the missing information. Your submission on this potential suspension of deadlines is due in writing close of business March 14, 2005. Once the Board reviews your reply, the Board will make its decision.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at 867-983-4603.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Briscoe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

S. Briscoe, Executive Director
Nunavut Impact Review Board

cc Honorable Andy Scott, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
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