



March 21, 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

Re: Meadowbank Gold Project

Dear Mr. Goodings:

The NIRB acknowledges receipt of your letter dated March 18, 2005, indicating that the February 24th, 2005 press release will not result in significant changes to the Meadowbank Gold Project (Project).

On January 17, 2005, the NIRB sent a letter to the Meadowbank distribution list inviting Parties to comment on the conformity of Cumberland's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In doing so, interested persons were asked to identify omissions in the DEIS with respect to the directives outlined in each section of the NIRB's final Guidelines issued February 20, 2004.

On March 3, 2005, NIRB received comments from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Environment Canada (EC), Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Government of Nunavut Department of Environment (GN-DOE), GN Department of Economic Development and Transportation (GN-EDT), Transport Canada (TransCan), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), Health Canada; the Athabasca Denesuline Negotiation Team and the Manitoba Denesuline (received on March 14, 2005). These submissions have been placed on the NIRB Public Registry and the NIRB ftp site at: [http://ftp.nunavut.ca/nirb/Reviews/03MN107-%20Meadowbank%20Gold%20Mine/Project%20Documents/02%20-%20onwards%20\(Public%20Registry%20Documents\)/](http://ftp.nunavut.ca/nirb/Reviews/03MN107-%20Meadowbank%20Gold%20Mine/Project%20Documents/02%20-%20onwards%20(Public%20Registry%20Documents)/).

Upon review of the DEIS and taking into consideration the Parties' submissions, NIRB determined the result of its Conformity Review as shown in the attached Table. The intent of NIRB's Conformity Review is *not* to assess the *quality* of the information, only its presence or absence as stated in NIRB's letter to the Distribution List on January 17, 2005.

The results of NIRB's Conformity Review indicate that the DEIS *generally* conforms to the Guidelines, meaning that the DEIS captures many but not all of the requirements set out in the Guidelines. Consequently, there remain deficiencies which require addressing prior to the Technical Review of the Project. NIRB intends to give you the opportunity to address those deficiencies and that is the purpose of the Board's quick response to your letter of last Friday.

Specific deficiencies identified by NIRB are highlighted in the attached Table. Sections highlighted in red do not in the Board's opinion conform to the Guidelines. Deficiencies highlighted in yellow require

clarification as directed by the corresponding comment. NIRB asks that Cumberland answer both the red and yellow deficiencies.

In addition, the Board is concerned with the potential review of a fragmented EIS given the Parties' response to the issues surrounding the Feasibility Study and the deficiencies identified through the Conformity Review. Therefore, the Board encourages Cumberland to now submit one integrated and cohesive revised DEIS including in particular a complete description of the all-weather road and its associated impacts.

Once the NIRB establishes that Cumberland has better addressed project changes (especially the road), and based on a revised DEIS, the NIRB can then proceed directly to a Technical Review.

In an effort to maintain the original dates for the Pre-Hearing Conference for the week of May 9th, 2005, the NIRB has decided to move the deadline for receipt of technical comments from the Parties to May 2nd, 2005. However, to achieve this goal, NIRB requires receipt of Cumberland's submission no later than **April 4, 2005**. Obviously, the preservation of these Technical Review and Pre-Hearing dates is highly contingent on Cumberland adequately fulfilling the requests outlined in this letter. At the same time, the Board needs all Parties to continue to work on the Technical Review and is notifying Parties of this request via copy of this letter to them.

Regarding your upcoming April 4, 2005 submission, the NIRB requires that three (3) hard copies and two (2) electronic copies of all documentation be received by the Cambridge Bay office by the April 4th, 2005 deadline. You will need to provide copies to the Parties and we ask that copies be received by the Parties by the April 4, 2005 deadline as well.

In anticipation of Cumberland satisfying the above, NIRB is tentatively considering a Technical Meeting in Rankin Inlet on May 5th and 6th, followed by Pre-Hearing Conferences in Rankin Inlet, Baker Lake and Chesterfield Inlet the week of May 9th, 2005.

Incidentally, NIRB is copying the Nunavut Planning Commission (NPC) with this letter to allow it the opportunity to decide whether or not the changes to the Project Proposal change in any way the NPC's Conformity Determination. NIRB, under normal circumstances would forward this information to the NPC for a ruling, however, as time is of the essence, NIRB, in the absence of detailed information on the proposed changes, encourages Cumberland to contact the NPC as soon as possible to deal with this matter. If in the opinion of the NPC the changes to the Project Proposal do affect the original Determination, NIRB will stop its review process until the NPC review is complete.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Briscoe, Executive Director
Nunavut Impact Review Board

Attachment enclosed

cc Honourable Andy Scott, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Mr. Luke Coady, Executive Director, Nunavut Planning Commission
Distribution List