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To whom it may concern

9th February 2006

Letter of Support for establishment of a **Precambrian Research Center**

at the Natural Resources Research Institute, University of Minnesota, Duluth

This letter has been written after I received a proposal for the establishment of the above Center from Jim Miller of the Minnesota Geological Survey.

I am an emeritus professor of the University of Toronto where I taught and researched from 1967 to 2000. Much of my work was based on Precambrian rocks throughout the world. I have no record of the number of undergraduate students that I have taught, but the graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and research associates for whom I was the principal supervisor total 47. Most of them studied Precambrian rocks, and many now work in the mining industry or related fields.

I completely endorse the comments made in the proposal concerning the decrease in instruction in field geology, petrology and mineralogy, of all ages of rocks, but particularly as it relates to ancient terrains. While the decrease is most marked within the United States, it is also true of much of Europe (I now reside in the UK) and Canada, and, I'm ashamed to say, of my own University! The majority of staff hired in the Earth Sciences today have never had a wide field experience but are valued for their abilities at modeling earth systems or in using cutting edge equipment (both chemical and physical). Valuable as these talents are to understanding earth processes, they are applied to explaining observations on natural phenomena. It is essential that the observations that they seek to explain are of the highest caliber, and this can no longer be taken for granted. Current university staff train the succeeding generations who will populate the universities, and once field skills are lost within academia, it will be extremely difficult to recapture them. Thus time is of the essence, and it is very important to support centers where the skills are still preserved before existing staff retire and are replaced by those lacking the skills.

As the proposal states, the State of Minnesota has had a long tradition of field mapping and related research in Precambrian terrains, both at the Universities and the Geological Survey, and the University at Duluth is the logical place to maintain and strengthen this tradition. I give the proposal my very strongest support.

Sincerely,

A.J. Naldrett
University Professor Emeritus
University of Toronto