

To the Editors:

The Minister of Environment and Labour, the Honourable Mark Parent, recently announced approval for a surface gold mine in Halifax County, the first of its kind in decades. The Mining Association of Nova Scotia is obviously pleased with this decision but more importantly, we are pleased that the environmental assessment process that was undertaken was done so in a thorough, fair, reasonable and equitable manner. It is a “Win – Win” situation for both the mine developer and Nova Scotia.

For those of you who may not know, the Province of Nova Scotia has a well-established, clear and defined process for environmental assessments for proposed developments in the mining industry. The process is elaborate, extensive, and demands that a proponent address all aspects of the project including many projected contingencies that may result from their proposed activities while developing the mine site.

Some will tell you that the process isn't fair since the environmental assessment is actually put together by the organization or individual that hopes to develop the site. While some may question the objectivity of such a report, I would ask if you were willing to spend your hard-earned tax dollars to support an environmental feasibility study for mine development? Be assured that environmental assessments are only prepared by professionals certified in their fields and then the document is critically reviewed by experienced officials in the Department of Environment and Labour.

The terms of the Environmental Assessment approval normally specify monitoring practices to assure that the specific project meets environmental design objectives and if not, appropriate actions taken to render the project into compliance. Failure to meet compliance is subject to severe corporate and management penalties including possible shutdown of operations. That well established system ensures that the checks and balances are in place through the process to address the interests of our environment and society.

Another question to consider is the equitable application of NS law and environmental policy. Few other sectors of natural resources are subjected to these strict environmental conditions. Do fishermen have to account for the damage they cause in dragging their nets on the ocean floor? Is the forest industry held to the same standard of environmental practices? The agricultural industry annually disturbs large areas of land surface in preparation and maintenance of planted areas – do they undergo environmental assessments? Are all construction sites including pits and quarries monitored in a consistent fashion? Do housing developments or even golf courses undergo the same strict processes before their land use is approved? There is sound argument to suggest that the mining industry is subject to a very high standard for commercial development that promotes environmental sustainability and socially responsible operation.

Now, let's talk a bit about the project in question situated at Moose River. This will be an open pit gold mine which means that the gold ore will be excavated by a surface mining operation. The size of the open pit project footprint, will be comparable to the size of Mic Mac Mall. The entire project including buildings and site infrastructure will not be any bigger than the commercial development at Dartmouth Crossing. Over the life of the mine, which is expected to run between 5 to 7 years, over \$25M will be spent on environmental management.

Benefits for the rural community will be plenty – over 200 local jobs will be created for the construction phase. Some 150 jobs will be available for the life cycle of the mine. Most importantly, the company has not only committed to hiring 90% of the people from the Musquodoboit Valley and the Eastern Shore area but they have also agreed to work at bringing home our ex pats.

And when it is all over.....the reclamation will be completed in accordance with the laws of Nova Scotia. Atlantic Gold is committed to removing all facilities, providing opportunities for fish habitat to grow such as there is now on site, and re-vegetating the site. This is not only a commitment but also a legal requirement and is actually ensured by bonding carried by the firm from the beginning of the project to the final stage of reclamation.

In conclusion, Nova Scotians need to understand that “there is gold (and many other valuable minerals ) in them there hills”. The NS mining industry is committed to developing mine sites in an environmentally responsible way and are committed to working with government regulators, who are in their own right, skilled and competent managers attending to the environmental interests of Nova Scotia applying effective modern environmental statutes. After all, Nova Scotia is our home too.

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