



## **Prospect North Mining Conference Report**

The North-western Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce holds a firm belief in the value of partnerships and has a history of successful partnerships both here in North-western Ontario and beyond. We recognize their value and their importance for success in today's business environment.

The first Prospect North Mining conference took place at the Travelodge Hotel Airline on Thursday and Friday, October 23 and 24, an initiative of the North-western Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. As far as anyone could recall, it was the first regional conference in the Northwest to engage mainly senior (major) mining companies, as opposed to junior exploration companies.

Co-Chair Barry Streib envisaged a series of annual conferences. Streib, President of NOACC, said, "In our next phase, I'd like to see a more global perspective." This phase would involve invitations to the mining sector all across Canada as well as beyond our country's borders. He stated that this conference, having 150 registered delegates, had met its attendance target.

The first Prospect North Mining Conference was an expensive undertaking but had a productive successful learning curve. The conference met its target attendance goal not only in numbers but also the blend of attendees. There were many one-time expenses that will be amortized over the next series of annual conferences. The marketing and promotional expenditures will be greatly reduced in the future conferences. We have established logos, display materials, designs poster artwork, letterhead etc. These investments will have long-term value and a strong base on which to deliver future conferences.

Iain McCormack Co-Chair of the Conference stated, "We wanted to create a learning opportunity for NOACC members as well as people in the mining and business community." Ian McCormack added, "We felt that First Nation communities and individuals should have and can have opportunities in that industry." NOACC's goal was to present "strategic perspectives" rather than to debate issues.

The success of the conference was not only in the mining sector as a learning experience, but there was significant success by providing a platform to share perspective with, especially our first nation partners.

One of the presenters, Terry Waboose, Deputy Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) stated "Part of our mandate and job," he said, "is to educate . . . the broader community, including industry and governments and municipalities." His goal as presenter was to give the perspective of First Nations on their relationships to government and the mining sector. He remarked that he had received positive feedback: "My message was well received." Outside the conference proper, the Province of Ontario and Matawa First Nations held a press conference late Friday morning in order to sign a letter of intent. Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, represented the government. The letter documented the common goal of developing a protocol on traditional Matawa lands. Terry Waboose (NAN) also commented, "It is a milestone because it opens up that dialogue with government for those First Nations that did sign."

Chris Hodgson OMA President described mining as "an energy-intensive industry" Energy prices continue to rise even though the industry has made great strides in achieving energy efficiency. Co-generation is one solution. Therefore, he said, "A megawatt saved should be as valuable as a megawatt generated." Hodgson alluded to the Ontario government's initiative to modernize the Mining Act, stating that it was imperative to strike a balance between social aspirations and a healthy industry.

As for Premier McGuinty's initiative to develop a land use strategy for the Far North, he said, "If we get this right, it would be a marvellous achievement." In conclusion, Hodgson emphasized that mining has a bright future, not the least because industry, governments, NGO's (specifically environmental groups), and First Nations appear to be pulling in the same direction.

The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce and OMA also supported the Prospect North conference, as an initiative of NOACC and MNDM.

Barry Streib (NOACC) had previously remarked, "We're all partners in this thing whether we think we are or not."

Northern Ontario has many challenges ahead of us for future economic growth in our communities, but also, more importantly, we have many opportunities. I know it is a cliché, but when we all work together, we can make a significant difference for the betterment of all business, enabling us to develop and invigorate our economic climate during this historic global downturn.