

Prospecting and Exploration Assistance at the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

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The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (NSDNR) was the first provincial government department in Canada to assign a geologist full-time to prospector assistance and development in the late 1990s. Today, such commitment to prospecting is a provincial government standard in Canada.

Assistance is extended to both unlisted and listed companies. Exploration companies new to the province often require a higher level of technical expertise in order to help their geologists, who are unfamiliar with the geology and social culture of Nova Scotia. This expertise provides them with an opportunity to hit the ground running by assisting them in the development and institution of their mineral exploration plans in the province.

Assistance is available to any qualified party who asks. The assistance might consist of explaining Nova Scotia's legislative and regulatory framework to individuals new to prospecting or to experienced explorers who have never previously worked in the province. On-site mentoring of new prospectors in safe work practices and sound scientific principals is also part of the service the department offers.

A large component of the department's effort is on-site exploration assistance for prospectors (Fig. 1), which includes help with geological mapping and data collection. This aids the prospectors in obtaining the information they will need to create promotional materials, posters and handouts they can use to market their properties at trade shows during the winter financing season. NSDNR staff usually prepare and print these promotional materials as part of the assistance package for a prospector. These activities are consistent with the services to prospectors and exploration companies currently offered by other Canadian provinces and territories.



Figure 1. Geologist Ron Mills and prospector John MacIsaac examine quartz vein material in an old gold district.

The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) hosts an annual mineral exploration industry trade show in Toronto that is the main venue for Nova Scotia prospectors to attract funding to the local industry. Promotional materials for this show are prepared as posters and handouts with a uniform and distinctly Nova Scotian brand. The department assists prospectors who attend the PDAC convention with funds for travel, lodging and meals. Usually, support is provided for about a dozen prospectors to attend the convention. Further funding for NSDNR to support this activity would allow the department to provide such support to more prospectors, provide additional funding to each prospector, expand space at the PDAC convention, and extend participation to the Mineral Exploration Roundup in Vancouver.

Nova Scotia has not had a mineral exploration incentive program since 2004 and is the only jurisdiction in the nation not offering such assistance. This has left the province at a distinct

competitive disadvantage. However, an exciting new source of funding from the Government of Nova Scotia in 2012 should help promote exploration by establishing properties as viable exploration targets worthy of funding from within the industry. The funds will provide seed financing for grassroots exploration, as well as for more advanced exploration prospects. Additionally, funds will be used to finance promotional travel by

property holders by increasing the amount of personal funding available to them, and also will be used to increase the amount of display space at trade shows so that more Nova Scotia prospectors will be able to attend. Finally, the funds will allow the department to re-institute a prospector education and development program, to be delivered as part of a complete prospector development initiative.