‘One Window’ Mineral Development Meetings with Proponents in 2012

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Introduction

To clearly and effectively communicate the laws and policies that support and regulate the development of the province’s mineral resources, the Government of Nova Scotia provides a ‘One Window’ process for the proponents of mineral development projects. Under this process provincial and federal government departments that play a direct role in regulating, reviewing, licencing, leasing and monitoring mineral development activity in the province act together to streamline government oversight.

In 2012, the proponents of seven mineral development projects (four gold, two coal and one mineral sand projects) requested One Window meetings with government. These meetings are designed to provide proponents with a means of communicating with representatives of many different government departments in one sitting. The meetings are organized by the Mineral Development and Policy Section of the Mineral Resources Branch, which acts as Chair of the One Window Standing Committee.

Typically, the government departments involved are the Department of Natural Resources (Mineral Resources Branch and Land Services), N.S. Environment (Environmental Monitoring and Compliance and Environmental Assessment), Department of Labour and Advanced Education, Office of Aboriginal Affairs (OAA), Environment Canada and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA). However, some projects may also require the involvement of Transport Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and other provincial and federal departments.

2012 Proponent Meetings

The following is a brief outline of the seven mineral development projects that were the subject of One Window proponent meetings in 2012. They are listed here in chronological order.

On January 31, 2012, a One Window meeting was held for Ressources Appalaches of Rimouski, Que., to describe their three-staged proposal to re-open the former Dufferin gold mine in Halifax County. The company is the sole owner of the mineral lease for a small underground gold operation on this property. Government representatives outlined to the company the approvals needed in order to dewater the existing underground workings and re-start the mine and milling operation. The company subsequently submitted a Code of Practice for the dewatering program, made application and received approval to remove water from the workings, and arranged financing to proceed with underground exploration work, which could lead to a feasibility study in 2013.

Rare Earth Mineral Sands Inc. of Windsor, N.S., on March 5, 2012, described to the One Window committee a proposed $250-million dredging and mineral processing project designed to recover titanium and rare earth minerals from sand bars in Cobequid Bay and in the Shubenacadie River. The company held a follow-up meeting with Aboriginal Affairs on March 16, 2012, to discuss the process of engaging with the Mi’kmaw and in October 2012 submitted a draft Environmental Assessment registration document to NS Environment for comment. The company has subsequently been informed by CEAA that under the recently revised Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (2012),
the company will be required to submit a project description that will be used to determine whether the project needs to undergo a federal environmental assessment (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2012).

Joint venture partners Xstrata Coal (75%) and Erdene Developments Inc. (25%) provided additional information and solicited reviewer comment on their draft Environmental Impact Statement during a May 17, 2012, One Window meeting. This statement was part of a CEAA-led comprehensive environmental assessment for the $500-million Donkin coking coal project. At the meeting, government representatives provided feedback to the draft document and the proponents subsequently filed their Environmental Impact Statement on July 16, 2012 (Stantec Consulting Ltd., 2012). Public meetings were held and comments from the public were submitted to the proponents for response. CEAA then issued a draft Comprehensive Study Report in November 2012 for government comment before it goes out for final public review in March 2013.

On June 21, 2012, consultant Fred Bonner described a small-scale gold mining and milling project for the Tangier property at a One Window meeting. At the time, Bonner was acting on behalf of his client River Exploration and Mining Inc. In 1997, an Environmental Assessment (EA) document was approved by government for an underground mine and mill on this property. In 2009 that EA was transferred to Acadian Mining. Subsequent to the One Window meeting, Acadian signed a deal with another company (Acadian Mining Corporation, 2012a), transferring ownership of the Tangier property to Flex Mining and Exploration.

On July 5, 2012, DDV Gold attended a One Window meeting to discuss the next steps for proceeding with development of the Touquoy gold deposit at Moose River Gold Mines, Halifax County. Following the signing of a Vesting Order on June 15, 2012, which vested in the company the ability to expropriate private lands required for the project, the company was seeking advice on how to proceed with the application for an Industrial Approval. The company subsequently submitted an Industrial Approval application on November 28, 2012.

Brogan Mining, on September 21, 2012, described a proposal to develop a small-scale surface coal mine on a property at Point Aconi in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. The operation would be designed to supply about 2000-3000 tonnes of coal per year to local markets. Government representatives provided information on what would be required to complete the company’s 2004 Environmental Assessment and what would be required to bring Mineral Lease rentals up to date.

The final ‘One Window’ proponent meeting of 2012 was held on December 10. At the meeting, Goldworx International Corp. of Toronto, Ontario, presented various development options for the former-producing Goldenville gold property in Guysborough County. The company initiated a process in November to acquire the property from Acadian Mining (Acadian Mining Corporation, 2012b).

Also in 2012, the One Window Standing Committee updated the publication A Users’ Guide to the ‘One Window’ Process: Mineral Development in Nova Scotia (Mineral Development and Policy Section, 2012). This guide is a useful reference for the mineral exploration and mining industry and is available from the DNR Library or online.

Conclusions

All of the proponents of mineral development projects in Nova Scotia who participated in One Window meetings in 2012 reported that they found the One Window process to be an effective means of communicating with the government departments directly involved in approving activities related to their projects. All of the proponents expressed appreciation for having access to such a process and encouraged government to continue with it because it is an effective means of communicating the laws and policies that support the sustainable development of the province’s mineral resources.
References

Acadian Mining Corporation 2012a: Acadian sells non-core assets; press release no. 09-12, September 25, 2012; [link]

Acadian Mining Corporation 2012b: Acadian sells non-core assets; press release no 10-12, October 16, 2012; [link]

