

2013 ‘One Window’ Meetings with Proponents of Mineral Development Projects

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Introduction

Developing a mineral deposit into a mine that benefits both the proponent (by generating a profit) and society (by satisfying a need) is not a simple undertaking.

Basically, responsible and sustainable mineral management demands that government and proponents work together to apply socially, economically and environmentally acceptable means of extracting minerals from a deposit so that society can benefit from the use of these minerals. This is a very complex challenge. It requires meaningful engagement between a proponent and various ‘communities of interest’—a process that typically considers global economics, best available technology, ecological concerns and how the land is to be used after mining is completed.

Due to the complexity of mineral development, more than one government department has been granted authority to oversee the activity. Therefore, the proponents of mineral development projects need to engage with each of these departments to ensure that a deposit is developed safely, economically and with minimal impact on the environment.

To facilitate this process, the government of Nova Scotia provides a ‘One Window’ process so that the province’s laws and policies that support and regulate the development of the province’s mineral resources can be clearly communicated to the proponents of mineral development projects (Mineral Development and Policy Section, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, 2012). Under the One Window process, provincial and federal government departments that have direct roles in regulating, reviewing, licensing, leasing and monitoring mineral development activity in the

province act together to streamline government oversight.

In 2013, the proponents of two mineral development projects (one gold and one mineral sands project) requested One Window meetings with government. These meetings provided the proponents with a means of meeting representatives of many different government departments in one sitting. They provided an opportunity for the proponent to describe their proposed project, and gave an opportunity to government representatives to ask questions for clarification and to provide guidance. The Mineral Development and Policy Section of the Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) Mineral Resources Branch acted as chair of the One Window Standing Committee and organized the meetings.

Typically, the government departments involved in proponent meetings are the Department of Natural Resources (Mineral Resources Branch, Regional Services Branch and Land Services Branch), Nova Scotia Environment (Compliance Division and Environmental Assessment Branch), Department of Labour and Advanced Education (Occupational Health and Safety Division), Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Environment Canada and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. However, some projects may also require the involvement of Transport Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Fisheries and Oceans, and other provincial and federal departments.

2013 Proponent Meetings

As stated above, there were two One Window proponent meetings held in 2013. This was significantly fewer than the seven meetings held in 2012, possibly reflecting the global downturn in commodity prices and the subsequent downturn in

the availability of risk capital needed to finance mineral development projects.

The following is a brief outline of the mineral development projects that were the subject of the two One Window proponent meetings held in 2013.

Goldworx

On June 27, 2013, a One Window meeting was held for Goldworx of Toronto, Ont. The objective was to provide an update on the company's plans to explore for gold at the formerly producing Goldenville gold property in Guysborough County (Fig. 1).

The company reported that they have held four meetings with members of the local community and the Mi'kmaq to describe their project and the

types of jobs that might be expected as the project proceeds. They also stated that they have started collecting environmental baseline data in anticipation of conducting an Environmental Assessment.

Initially, the company intends to drill 53 short diamond-drill holes, about 63 metres deep, in order to identify a location to extract a 10 000-tonne bulk sample. This material would be used to conduct metallurgical testing (gravity and flotation), probably in a small, portable mill and to test the viability of using an ore-sorting machine in the milling process.

Members of the One Window Standing Committee informed the company of the various regulations that would apply to the project. Represented on the committee were Nova Scotia Environment, Labour



Figure 1. Goldenville property (looking west).

and Advanced Education, the Renewable Resources Branch and the Mineral Resources Branch of DNR, the federal department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

Rare Earth Mineral Sands Inc.

On November 18, 2013, a One Window meeting was held at the request of Rare Earth Mineral Sands Inc. of Windsor, N.S. The objective of this meeting was to allow the company to respond to the feedback it had received from Nova Scotia Environment on a draft Environmental Assessment registration document that was submitted in 2012.

In addition, the company presented an update on the project, which contemplates recovering titanium-bearing minerals and rare-earth-bearing

minerals from sand bars in Cobequid Bay and in the Shubenacadie River (Fig. 2). The company envisions using dredges to extract the sands. A gravity concentrate would be recovered by processing the sands through spirals on-board the dredge, and most of the sand would be returned immediately to the sand bar. The gravity concentrates would then be transferred to a processing plant on land where the final saleable concentrates would be produced.

The company later reported that, subject to securing additional financing, it is considering taking a large bulk sample of the sands and processing the sample in order to evaluate the proposed metallurgical processes necessary for producing saleable concentrates. The economic feasibility of the proposed dredging and mineral processing project could then be evaluated. Other



Figure 2. Sand bars in Cobequid Bay at the mouth of the Shubenacadie River (looking west).

technical alternatives are also being considered to minimize the expense of preparing such a costly, large bulk sample.

Members of the One Window Standing Committee informed the company of the various regulations that would apply to the project. The committee represented Nova Scotia Environment, Labour and Advanced Education, the Renewable Resources Branch and the Mineral Resources Branch of DNR, the federal department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

Memorandum of Understanding

Also in 2013, the One Window Standing Committee reviewed the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding between DNR and Nova Scotia Environment and Labour, and drafted a proposed update for the deputy ministers of the departments of Natural Resources, Environment, Labour and Advanced Education, and Aboriginal Affairs to consider.

Conclusions

Developing a mineral deposit into a mine that benefits both the proponent and society is not a simple undertaking. However, the proponents of

two mineral development projects in Nova Scotia who participated in One Window meetings in 2013 reported that they found the process to be an effective means of communicating with the government departments directly involved in approving activities related to their projects. 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 province's laws and policies that support the responsible, sustainable development of the province's mineral resources.

Reference

Mineral Development and Policy Section 2012: A users' guide to the 'One Window' process: mineral development in Nova Scotia; Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, Open File Report ME 2012-005, 40 p.; http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/meb/data/pubs/12ofr05/OFR_ME_2012-005.pdf.