

# The Prospector Assistance Program: nourishing the grass roots of the mineral industry

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The Prospector Assistance Program helps prospectors learn prospecting skills, provides a contribution for working a mineral claim, and assists them in marketing their properties. Although the idea of prospector assistance is not new, the current program, which began in 1997, is different than previous prospector programs.

Prospector assistance programs began in the early 1990s as part of the Canada-Nova Scotia Cooperation Agreement on Mineral Development (CAMD). The Prospector Assistance Program under the most recent CAMD (1992-1995) was one of the agreement's most popular programs and the results were gratifying. There are now over 640 registered prospectors with approximately 240 companies or individuals holding one or more mineral licences in the province. Approximately 150 prospectors received assistance grants for work on their properties between 1992 and 1995. During the same time more than 200 people completed the Basic Prospecting Course and 12 attended the first offering of the Advanced Prospecting Course.

The cooperation agreements also provided limited financial assistance to attend trade shows for marketing mineral properties. Many prospectors attended the annual Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada meeting in Toronto and were able to interest companies in their properties.

The current Prospector Assistance Program (PAP) builds on this past experience. The department has brought together all parts of prospector assistance into one program instead of several. The program is funded by the Canada-Nova Scotia Economic Diversification Agreement, which is jointly administered by the Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development and Tourism and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). The agreement has a value of \$600 000 over four years and will end in 2001. Table 1 provides the budget for each component of the PAP.

The Prospector Assistance Program has three components: (1) prospector training, (2) prospector assistance, and (3) marketing assistance. Although each component is independent of the others, all three are

integrated to encourage development of the province's mineral potential.

Prospector training provides support for training entry-level prospectors in different locations throughout Nova Scotia. An advanced course is offered as demand warrants and gives additional experience to those prospectors who have graduated from the basic course. Table 2 lists the locations of courses in the past several years.

Financial assistance under the prospector assistance component provides a base level of support for individual prospectors to search for new mineral deposits and attract exploration activity by larger companies. Both the prospector and the program contribute toward this component. If a prospector has an application approved for the maximum amount of \$5000, then he or she is required to contribute a minimum of \$1500 to the project. Table 3 shows the number of assistance contributions and the target minerals.

The third component is marketing assistance for promoting and marketing mineral claims. Most of the marketing work is conducted at national and international trade shows. These provide an unparalleled opening to present Nova Scotia's mineral potential and investment opportunities to mining companies and industry representatives. Marketing assistance for prospectors provides financial assistance to travel to trade shows, to display information and show samples, and to make contacts with industry people. Table 4 lists the various trade shows and the number of prospectors attending in the first two years of the program.

The Prospector Assistance Program has been successful in obtaining the support of the prospecting community. Shortly after the program was made official in August 1997, the Mineral and Energy Resources Division hosted a workshop for stakeholders. Representatives of the prospecting community at large, the Prospectors Association of Nova Scotia, the Mining Society of Nova Scotia, and the Chamber of Mineral Resources of Nova Scotia met with division staff to review the guidelines and operating procedures of the

**Table 1.** Budget for the Prospector Assistance Program.

Component	Year 1 1997-98	Year 2 1998-99	Year 3 1999-00	Year 4 2000-01	Component Total
1. Training	\$15 000.00	\$25 000.00	\$20 000.00	\$20 000.00	\$80 000.00
2. Assistance	\$20 000.00	\$100 000.00	\$140 000.00	\$140 000.00	\$400 000.00
3. Marketing	\$30 000.00	\$30 000.00	\$30 000.00	\$30 000.00	\$120 000.00
<b>Yearly Totals</b>	<b>\$65 000.00</b>	<b>\$155 000.00</b>	<b>\$190 000.00</b>	<b>\$190 000.00</b>	
<b>Total Amount of PAP</b>					<b>\$600 000.00</b>

**Table 2.** Location of prospecting courses.

Year	Basic Course	Advanced Course
Fall 1997	Port Hawkesbury, Halifax	Not offered
Spring 1998	Sydney, Halifax, Bridgewater	Halifax
Fall 1998	Stellarton, Halifax	Not offered
Spring 1999	Windsor, Sydney	Stellarton

**Table 3.** Summary of prospector assistance component applications.

Calendar Year	PAP Year	Number of Prospectors	Target Minerals
1997	Year 1, 1997-98	0	No prospector assistance component funding
1998	Year 2, 1998-99	22	vein and disseminated gold; paleoplacer gold; kaolin; base metals
1999	Year 3, 1999-00	28	vein and disseminated gold; paleoplacer gold; barite/fluorite; base metals; kaolin

program. The department launched the program at the annual Review of Activities in November 1997.

Prospectors have been enthusiastic in supporting the program. Each of the prospector training courses has been filled and many of the graduates have staked claims. Interest in prospector assistance contributions was so great in 1998 that we could only fund the first 22 applicants from a total of 36. Table 4 illustrates that prospectors have appreciated the support for marketing their properties. In the first two years of operation, 34 prospectors have received financial assistance to travel to

trade shows and market their mineral properties or products.

Another measure of success is how the mineral industry views the properties offered at various trade shows. Companies in Australia, South Africa, the United States and Canada have expressed interest in the properties marketed by Nova Scotia prospectors, either through the publication *Properties for Option in Nova Scotia* or at trade shows. Some of the interest has resulted in option agreements.

**Table 4.** Trade shows attended by prospectors.

<b>Date PAP Year</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Trade Show; Types of Properties</b>	<b>Number of Prospectors</b>
January 1998 Year 1 1997-98	Vancouver	British Columbia and Yukon Chamber of Mines Cordilleran Roundup; disseminated and vein gold	3
March 1998 Year 1 1997-98	Toronto	Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada; paleoplacer gold, vein gold, base metals, rare earths	14
January 1999 Year 2 1998-99	Vancouver	British Columbia and Yukon Chamber of Mines Cordilleran Roundup; paleoplacer gold, barite/fluorite, base metals	4
January 1999 Year 2 1998-99	Toronto	Landscape Ontario trade show; various styles and sizes of shaped granite cobbles and granite tiles	1
March 1999 Year 2 1998-99	Toronto	Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada; vein and disseminated gold, base metals, barite	12

Prospecting is the grass roots of the mineral industry. Without a trained and motivated community of prospectors, many of the mineral discoveries that we need for future production will not be made. In this sense,

prospectors are the future of the industry. In Nova Scotia, the Prospector Assistance Program provides the nourishment to sustain prospecting and the mineral industry.

