

Mining Matters for Nova Scotia '98: forging new partnerships

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Introduction

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the same group under its former names, has been hosting an annual conference in the Fall of each year since 1977. In the early days the conference, which was called an 'Open House', was held at the Technical University of Nova Scotia. In later years the name was changed to 'Annual Review of Activities' and the event was held in several Halifax venues, including the Lord Nelson Hotel, The Sheraton Hotel, and more recently, the World Trade and Convention Centre.

The conference has traditionally focused on the results of geoscience research by DNR and other research agencies. The conference has also provided a forum for the geoscience community of Nova Scotia to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern. In the early years of the conference, technical presentations and displays were delivered entirely by departmental staff. Gradually, the conference expanded to include representatives from local universities and the Geological Survey of Canada in Ottawa and Dartmouth. In the late 1980s, the Chamber of Mineral Resources of Nova Scotia (CMRNS) was invited to participate in the conference, and hosted technical sessions and workshops. In 1996, the Mining Society of Nova Scotia (MSNS) began holding its annual Fall meeting in conjunction with the DNR 'Review of Activities'.

Redefining the Annual Conference

In early 1998, the author was asked to review DNR's annual conference to determine if the event was attaining its goals and objectives. After consultation with departmental staff, representatives from the mineral industry, and external geoscience agencies, I recommended that fundamental changes be made to the conference. The new focus would highlight opportunities for mineral-related economic development with an emphasis on developing new linkages and partnerships with non-traditional client groups. To reflect this fundamental change in focus, the name of the conference was changed from 'Review of Activities' to 'Mining

Matters for Nova Scotia '98: Opportunities for Economic Development'. The ultimate goal was to increase awareness of the importance of mining to the economy of Nova Scotia and to garner support for future mineral development projects.

Mining Matters for Nova Scotia '98

In May 1998, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (EDT) was approached to be a partner in the organization of the conference. EDT promoted the conference to Regional Development Authorities and Business Centres throughout the province. In addition, DNR and EDT invited a wide range of organizations to attend the conference, including municipal agencies, other provincial government departments, and economic development agencies. As in previous years, the Mining Society of Nova Scotia, Chamber of Mineral Resources of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Prospectors Association were integral in the organization and implementation of the conference.

The 1998 Mining Matters conference was held at the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax on November 9 and 10, 1998. A total of 411 delegates attended the event, a record attendance in the more than 20 years that the department has hosted their annual fall conference!

Gisele Jacob, Vice President (Public Affairs) of the Mining Association of Canada, gave the keynote address on Tuesday, November 10. Ms. Jacob spoke about the importance of the mining industry to the Canadian economy and her involvement with the national *Mining Works for Canada* campaign. She reviewed some of the challenges currently facing the mining industry, including globalization of capital markets, liberalization of investment regimes, and rapidly changing technologies. Ms. Jacob summarized the many ways that mining is important to Canadians, accounting for a \$26.2 billion contribution to the Gross Domestic Product.

Mining Matters for Nova Scotia '98 featured a commercial trade show with service and supply companies, a first for the annual conference. In addition,

several mineral-producing companies, exploration companies and prospectors had displays in the exhibit area. More than 50 geoscientists from DNR, the Geological Survey of Canada, and local universities participated with exhibits highlighting current research in Nova Scotia.

Technical sessions were organized by the Mining Society of Nova Scotia and DNR and were held on November 9 and 10. Speakers represented several groups including the mineral industry, DNR, EDT, the Department of Agriculture and Marketing, and provincial Aboriginal groups. These sessions were very well attended, attesting to the high quality of the talks given. Presentations covered a wide range of topics including: the partnership between Georgia Pacific Corporation and Aboriginal Nations in developing a new gypsum mine in Melford; using zeolites to make kitty litter and much more; an overview of Nova Scotia's newest gold mine; development opportunities related to our famous fossil cliffs; the connection between aggregate sand deposits and cranberry bogs; reclamation activities at the former East Kemptville tin mine; developing community relationships at the Murchyville gypsum mine; current kaolin exploration in central Nova Scotia; and mineral-related opportunities associated with the Sable Offshore Energy Project.

A field trip was held on November 8 as part of the Mining Matters conference. The trip focused on the geology, mining and mineral exploration activities of central Nova Scotia and was organized by Dr. Ralph Stea. Approximately 40 people attended the trip.

The Honourable Kennie MacAskill hosted a Baron of Beef reception in the exhibit area on November 9. Mr. MacAskill spoke to the delegates about the importance of mining to Nova Scotia's economy. Following this he welcomed out-of-province delegates into the Order of Good Times, presenting them with commemorative certificates from the Government of Nova Scotia.

Assessment of Mining Matters '98

A questionnaire was circulated to delegates at the conference, to evaluate the effectiveness of the event and provide input for future changes. The response was very positive and strongly supported the new approach (Table 1). Of the 42 respondents to the questionnaire, 48% were attending the event for the first time. 98% of the respondents indicated that they were interested in attending the conference in 1999. On a rating scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) the respondents gave the Mining Matters conference a good or better rating (see Table 1).

Mining Matters for Nova Scotia '98: Opportunities for Economic Development provided an opportunity to spotlight the importance of the mining industry to a large, non-traditional client group. Initial response from the delegates was invariably positive and supportive of continuing this new focus for the conference in future.

Mining Matters '99

A committee is now working on plans for the Mining Matters '99 conference, to be held November 8 and 9, 1999, at the World Trade and Convention Centre. The partnerships that were initiated at last year's event will be expanded upon. This year's event will focus on the mineral-related opportunities that exist in Cape Breton Island, which may help offset the down-turn in the Cape Breton coal industry. The possibility of a field trip on Cape Breton Island is currently being investigated.

The Mining Matters conference not only serves our traditional clients in the mineral industry, but new clients as well. It provides an opportunity to showcase the importance of the mineral industry to the economic development of Nova Scotia. Keeping DNR's annual conference topical and poignant will ensure its future success.

Table 1. Evaluation of Mining Matters '98 conference.

Group	Mining	Exploration	Econ. Dev.	Fed./Prov.	Consultants	Service	University	Other	Total
Number of questionnaires	1	8	3	7	3	7	9	4	42
No. of 1st time attendees	1	0	2	3	2	3	6	4	48%
Length of conference OK?	yes-1	yes-8	yes-3	yes-7	y-2; n.a.-1	y-6; long-1	y-7; short-1	yes-4	y-93%
Willing to pay registration fee	yes-1	yes-4; no-4	yes-3	yes-5; no-2	yes-1; no-1	yes-5; no-2	yes-2; no-7	yes-2; no-2	y-55%
Interested in attending next year	yes-1	yes-8	yes-3	yes-7	y-2; poss.-1	yes-7	yes-9	yes-4	y-98%
Ratings									
Organization	4	4.1	4	4.2	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.7	4.3
Guided tours of display areas	4	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.5	4.3	4.2	4	3.7
Trade show and geosc. displays	4	4	4	4	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.7	4.2
Oral presentations	5	3	4.3	3.9	4.5	4.3	4.2	4	4.1
Social functions	4	3.7	3.5	3	4	3.2	3.8	4.5	3.7
Venue for conference	n/a	4.1	4.7	4.5	3	4.3	4.3	4.7	4.2
Field trip	n/a	5	5	4	4	5	4.3	5	4.6
Average Score	4.2	3.9	4.1	3.9	4	4.3	4.2	4.5	

Ratings: 1-poor; 2-fair; 3-average; 4-good; 5-excellent

