

22 May 2008

Hon. Michael Gravelle
Minister

L'hon. Michael Gravelle
Ministre



Ministry of Northern Development
and Mines

Ministère du Développement du Nord
et des Mines

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08-0698

Mr. Garry Clark
Ontario Prospectors Association
1000 Alloy Drive
Thunder Bay ON P7B 6A5

Dear Mr. Clark:

I am pleased to provide you with the first issue of our *Update on Aboriginal Engagement – A Consultation Approach for Ontario's Mineral Sector Activities*. We have launched this newsletter to keep participants apprised of progress being made in our Aboriginal Engagement initiative.

As the new Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I would like to reiterate that Ontario is committed to meeting its duty to consult with Aboriginal communities on mineral sector activities.

In February 2007, my ministry issued a discussion paper and launched public discussions on improving Aboriginal consulting processes for mineral sector activities. We are currently seeking input that will help us develop a consultation approach that works for everyone – Aboriginal communities, Ontario and the mineral industry. Over the coming months, we will be engaging with mineral industry stakeholders in workshops led by Margaret Wanlin, of Wanlin and Company.

I assure you that we are listening carefully to what we hear during the engagement process. We are also taking note of the direction we have received from the courts.

As a result, we are introducing a transitional approach that builds on what we've learned thus far and allows us to address some key concerns of Aboriginal

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communities, such as enhanced information sharing regarding claim staking and exploration activity, and withdrawal of important heritage sites. In addition, we will undertake immediate improvements to our own internal processes and enhance the information we provide to minerals industry clients on when and how to engage Aboriginal communities.

The enclosed newsletter provides some further details on our transitional approach.

Measures implemented under this approach are first steps only – they will not narrow the options considered as we continue to collaborate on the development of improved approaches to Aboriginal consultation. They will, however, allow us to improve on existing processes.

Over coming months, as we continue to gather input from Aboriginal communities and industry stakeholders, we will issue regular newsletters to keep you and your members informed.

At the same time, we will advance our work on a number of other fronts to foster strong and productive relationships among Aboriginal communities, the mineral sector and the ministry.

For example:

- We are engaging in collaborative geoscience and communication projects with several First Nations
- We are delivering prospecting training directly to First Nation communities and have hired Aboriginal community members to work on ministry mapping and communication projects
- We are sponsoring Aboriginal participation at technical, marketing and industry events to encourage stronger relationships and clearer communication between industry and First Nation communities
- We are partnering with First Nations, industry and Confederation College to deliver a “Basic Line Cutting Course”
- We have ensured Aboriginal representation on a number of ministry committees and advisory councils, including the Far North Northern Development Council, the Ontario Mineral Industry Cluster Council, and the Minister’s Mining Act Advisory Committee.

I hope you enjoy following the progress of our engagement process in this and coming issues of the newsletter. In addition, I urge you to join in the process of

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building a strong consultative framework that will promote positive mineral sector relations with Aboriginal communities, for the benefit of all Ontarians.

Please accept my best wishes

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Gravelle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Michael Gravelle, MPP, Thunder Bay – Superior North
Minister

Attachment