

# Towards Sustainable Mining

## Context

The Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) initiative is the Canadian mining industry's commitment to responsible mining. Established in 2004 by the Mining Association of Canada (MAC), TSM's objective is to enable mining companies to meet society's needs for minerals, metals and energy products in the most socially, economically and environmentally responsible way. It is a set of tools to drive performance and ensure that key mining risks are managed effectively by mining operations.

Adhering to the TSM Guiding Principles, mining companies exhibit leadership by

- Engaging with communities;
- Driving world-leading environmental practices; and
- Committing to the safety and health of employees and surrounding communities.



**Lead:** Industry (Ont.)

**Steps of the Mineral Development Sequence:**  
Development, operation, closure, post-closure

**Key Finding:** Towards Sustainable Mining provides a tool to build trust with local communities and use the benefits of positive relationships to deliver a business advantage.

## Description of Measures Implemented

TSM requires member companies to annually assess their performance against six protocols focusing on three core areas: Communities and People; Environmental Stewardship; and Energy Efficiency. Each protocol is made up of a set of indicators that help mining facilities measure and report on their performance in key areas of mining activity. Assessments are conducted where the mining activity takes place – at the facility level – providing local communities with a meaningful view of how a nearby mine is performing. Mining companies publicly report their facilities' performance in the annual TSM Progress Report and results are externally verified every three years.

One of the protocols specifically evaluates community engagement processes being implemented by mining companies at the facility level. The Aboriginal and Community Outreach Protocol requires facilities to have formal systems in place to establish who they should be speaking with about their operations and how to best engage with them. Facilities must establish two-way dialogue with their communities of interest (COI), have systems in place to receive and respond to concerns, and keep them apprised of their activities and performance. They are also required to publicly report on their engagement with communities. Facilities assess their performance against each of the protocol's four indicators and assign a letter grade based on a five-level scale, (C, B, A, AA and AAA). Level A and AAA are considered to be a good and best practice, respectively, with performance criteria established at each level, increasing in breadth and scope as the levels increase from C to AAA. As an illustration, to achieve Level A performance for the second indicator on effective COI engagement and dialogue, a facility has to provide evidence of the following:

- Assistance to ensure COI are able to participate in engagement and dialogue processes, where appropriate;
- Communications are written in the local language for COI (as required) and are written in language that is clear and understandable to COI;



- Designated employees have been informed of and trained in meeting Indigenous consultation requirements, including those procedural aspects that have been transferred to the proponent by any applicable government;
- Time is built into processes to allow for meaningful review of proposals by COI; and
- Relevant materials are provided to COI for review in a timely manner.

TSM also includes ongoing consultation with a national COI Advisory Panel. This independent multi-interest group oversees TSM and helps MAC members and COI foster dialogue, improve industry's performance and shape the program for continual improvement. The Panel played a vital role in the program's design from the very beginning and continues to be integral to its evolution. The Panel connects several times throughout the year and meets twice a year in person. Every year, the Panel's non-industry members prepare a statement to provide an independent reflection on TSM, the mining sector and relevant issues, which is published in the annual TSM Progress Report. MAC members benefit from the COI Panel's activities that are aimed at educating the industry about current issues and concerns.

## Results

Established in 2004, TSM now has over a decade's worth of results that demonstrate the program's success in driving performance improvement at mining operations across Canada and beyond. Since 2004, the number of facilities reporting TSM performance results has nearly doubled, and the adoption of TSM has grown beyond MAC's membership. In Canada, the Mining Association of British Columbia and the Quebec Mining Association are currently implementing TSM for their members. In 2015, the Finnish Mining Association adopted TSM, the first mining association outside of Canada to do so. MAC has also seen an increased interest in TSM from mining associations around the world that are looking to implement corporate responsibility standards their members.

Over the years, TSM has reached many important milestones, earned several awards and has been recognized for driving better social and environmental performance in the Canadian mining sector. TSM has been successful in pushing for continuous progress in the mining sector. The proof is in the results, which have seen steady improvement over the duration of TSM. For example, in the early years of TSM, most facilities had only informal systems or processes in place for engaging with communities and Indigenous peoples. Today, the results of this protocol are very strong, with the overwhelming majority of facilities demonstrating good practices in this area.

## Lessons Learned

Several lessons were learned through the development and implementation of TSM over the years:

- The **industry's license to operate rests on continuous improvement in the way that it operates and engages with communities of interest;**
- **Trust is built** on a record of good performance; and
- The involvement of an independent, multi-interest group in a corporate responsibility standard helps identify emerging issues for the sector and encourage the mining industry to raise the bar in corporate responsibility.

### For more information, contact:

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For a detailed look at facility-level results, visit [www.mining.ca/tsm](http://www.mining.ca/tsm).