

Mine Reclamation and Closure in the City of Timmins

Context

The City of Timmins was established as a mining town in the early 1900s during a gold rush that led to the discovery and development of numerous mines.¹ The Dome, Hollinger and McIntyre mines, which today fall within the municipal boundary of the City of Timmins, have been among the most successful gold mines in Canada over the last century with a combined production history of close to 50 million ounces of gold. The City of Timmins and Goldcorp have collaboratively undertaken the planning and implementation of a comprehensive mine closure and reclamation project adjacent to the city's downtown core. This municipal land base had been rendered unusable due to the lack of proper site remediation and mine closure planning. Over the last 10 years, Goldcorp, through its Porcupine Gold Mines, has launched a comprehensive closure program to remediate more than 20 legacy and closed mine sites acquired during their expansion in the Timmins area. The remediation costs are being funded from Goldcorp's existing operations around Timmins and are being planned and implemented in close cooperation with the City of Timmins and the Ontario Ministry of Environment.



Lead: Industry (Ont.)

Steps of the Mineral Development Sequence:
Closure, post-closure

Key Finding: The experience of the Hollinger Mine is seen as a good practice of a Canadian community and company working together to develop a solution-based approach to mine closure and reclamation.

Description of Measures Implemented

One of Goldcorp's larger sites, the Hollinger Mine, which is located next to the downtown core, was identified as a hazardous site. The reclamation and closure process for the Hollinger Mine included mine closure planning for recreational purposes, technical studies, public engagement, site plan control agreements, a best management plan, and a subsequent land use plan. Throughout the process, key engagement with citizens and the City informed the plans, and clear roles and responsibilities were outlined.

The creation of the Hollinger Project Community Advisory Committee (HPCAC) was a key step in the consultation and communication process. The Committee, which included citizens from different parts of Timmins, as well as technical advisors from Goldcorp and the City of Timmins, provided an open forum to gather ideas and inputs from the community through regular monthly meetings. Additionally, the Hollinger Project Information Centre was established in 2007 in response to the community's request for access to information on the project and is designed to act as a focal point for channeling information to the community. As of 2012, the Centre has been staffed by a full-time community liaison person to answer questions, provide information and manage feedback from the public.

¹ Originally appeared in "Strengthening Community Sustainability in the Mining Sector: Experience from Canada" by Richard R. Smith, published in June 2016 and prepared for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities under its CISAL program – Sustainable and Inclusive Communities in Latin America – funded by the Government of Canada. More information on the program and the full report is available at www.fcm.ca/home/programs/international/our-programs/sustainable-and-inclusive-communities-in-latin-america.htm.

Results

A number of plans were developed to facilitate the project, and the end result will be a lake for recreational use. As a result of the consultation and HPCAC, a number of other mechanisms were put in place to strengthen community interaction, facilitate oversight and enhance the transparency of the process:

- *Community Feedback Protocol*: In consultation with the Community Advisory Committee and the City of Timmins, the company established a Web-based system and dedicated e-mail address for citizens to provide immediate feedback directly to the company regarding noise, vibration, dust or any other concerns they may have with the project;
- *Response Procedures*: Goldcorp worked with Timmins to develop detailed guidelines, including target response times, for managing routine enquiries received either by telephone or by electronic form submitted through the Community Feedback Protocol, and the enquiries are shared with the City of Timmins through regular meetings;
- *Monitoring System*: Goldcorp invested in a sophisticated monitoring system to track the noise, dust and vibration levels in real time created by the Hollinger pit on an ongoing basis. This system, the only one of its kind in North America, is operated by a third party and is accessible online to anyone interested;
- *Site Plan Control Agreement*: In 2012, the City of Timmins and Goldcorp signed a Site Plan Control Agreement. This legally binding document sets out the operating and final land use parameters for the Hollinger mine project and stipulates the need for the company to develop a Best Management Plan; and
- *Best Management Plan*: This plan covers all phases of the project (planning, operation, closure) and provides details on the expectations and commitments regarding levels of noise, vibration and dust; reporting and public communications; complaint resolution; and contingency planning. The Plan incorporates global best practices into the Hollinger project.



Site of the Hollinger Mine, note proximity to the town to the west.

Lessons Learned

The experience of the Hollinger mine is seen as an example of a good practice of a Canadian community and company working together to develop a solution-based approach to mine closure and reclamation. Some of the lessons learned are as follows:

- *Community Support*: Timmins is a mining town, and its residents understand the important role that mining has played in its development, so they were very supportive of working with the company to build a future legacy for their community that reflected its mining heritage;
- *Early and Frequent Communication with the Community*: Goldcorp made a commitment to engage with the City of Timmins and the community from the very early stages of closure planning. These consultations, which included open houses, regular presentations to council and the establishment of an information centre and Community Advisory Committee, have exceeded the expectations of the City;

- *Partnership Approach:* Goldcorp has approached the closure and reclamation of the Hollinger mine as a partnership with the City of Timmins, as witnessed by the signing of a Site Plan Control Agreement between the two parties. This approach aided the building of a relationship characterized by a high degree of trust and confidence between the company and the community, facilitating the development and approval of plans for the final land use of the site;
- *Compliance versus Best Practices:* Although provincial regulations provided useful parameters for the development of a closure and reclamation plan, the municipality and the company worked together to develop strategies that enabled them to exceed the legislative requirements and to go beyond basic compliance to achieve this best practice.

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