

**THE PROSPECTORS AND DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ADDRESSES THE COMMITTEE OF PROVINCIAL GEOLOGISTS
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The following report summarizes the main points of a Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada presentation to the Committee of Provincial Geologists in Quebec City, August 28, 1988.

INTRODUCTION

Today the exploration and development industry is facing events and circumstances which are causing its members considerable concern. Chief among these are:

- a. a significant decrease in Canada's reserves of base metals;
- b. a pressing need for new mineral deposits and for grassroots prospecting to find them;
- c. a need to search for and extract minerals at greater depths and the associated additional costs and technical challenges that this presents;
and
- d. the lackluster condition of the equity markets and the consequent problems associated with the raising of exploration risk capital.

These are the critical factors that are currently affecting our industry. Together they form an equation which, if left unsolved, threatens Canada's competitive position in a world in which international competitiveness is becoming increasingly fierce. It is important to note that the federal government's new Canadian's Exploration Incentive Program (CEIP) is directed almost exclusively to junior mining companies. Since junior companies depend on an existing inventory of previously identified prospects in order to carry on their work of exploration and development, it follows that the level of grassroots prospecting and new discoveries must be maintained and increased in order that CEIP will be put to the best use.

In recognition of this situation the PDAC, in its brief to the Mines Ministers Conference this year, recommended that (a) financial incentives be provided to help maintain prospecting and exploration momentum and (b) a high quality, up-to-date geological database be maintained to help explorationists locate the great mineral wealth yet to be found but so cunningly hidden.

The latter is, of course, where the Geological Surveys will play a critical role.

Mapping

Without a doubt, geological mapping is the most fundamental component in the process of geoscientific data acquisition for exploration purposes. Mapping marks the beginning point of data acquisition and all other activities hinge on this vital information.

It is our perception that there has been a decline in the level of field activities of the Geological Surveys across the country relative to exploration activity and that present levels of field work are not as high as they have been in past years. We speak for our entire industry when we say that there are more benefits for everybody when government geologists are spending their time in the field rather than in the fluid inclusion labs. This is certainly not to diminish the importance of specialized research of this nature. It is simply to suggest that a sensible balance be maintained and that such research be recognized as an adjunct to the fundamental process of mapping.

Last year, the PDAC surveyed its members on the current state of geological mapping in Canada. Responses to the survey brought some specific concerns to light. Here are some of the questions and responses;

«How good is the existing map coverage?»

- 47% of the respondents said that coverage was inadequate and in need of improvement

«Where and how should mapping be conducted?»

- 62% stated that Geological Surveys should maintain a long-term agenda of areas to be mapped but also maintain the flexibility and ability to quickly focus on areas of special economic or scientific interest when the need arises

«What is the desired scale of regional geological maps?»

- 69% answered 1:100,000 or larger

«What is the desired scale of local geological maps?»

- 85% answered in the range of 1:50,000 to 1:25,000

Some of the most common unsolicited remarks focussed on the need to (a) improve on timeliness of publications (b) remap in areas where current maps are outdated (c) do less esoteric work and return to the field (d) reprint out-of-print maps and reports (e) standardize maps across provincial and territorial boundaries.

National Database

We believe that a national perspective is imperative in the acquisition, production and management of geoscientific data. Key words are integration, coordination, compatibility and standardization.

Integration and Standardization of Maps: The industry would like to see information that knows no political bounds. We would welcome the compilation and integration of all Canadian geological data, be they provincial or federal. The occasional volumes put out by the GSC are excellent references and summaries. However, what is really needed is information put out on a more frequent basis and designed to be of practical use to explorationists. We are talking here of maps produced at a scale geared to exploration and which possess the magical quality of transcending political boundaries.

Our industry would welcome any attempts on the part of the provinces to standardize map legends, symbols and scales. This kind of standardization would be of immense value to explorationists who now have to contend with cross-provincial inconsistencies and differences.

Compatibility and Coordination of Computer Systems: In the not too distant future most geoscientific data will be managed and accessed by computer systems. Indeed some of the provinces have already made significant headway in computer automation, and test projects are currently underway. Compatibility among these automated systems will benefit all of us, and the PDAC urges the individual Geological Surveys to work towards this common goal. Discussion and consideration of compatibility should begin at the conceptual stage of an automated system's design — that is NOW. Compatibility and standardization of computer equipment, software, and procedures will permit information flow from one system to another and will inevitably facilitate use of the systems. At this point, we cannot afford to proceed at different tangents.

Mineral Development Agreements (MDA's)

MDA's have, without exception, proven to be of immense value to our industry. The PDAC, in its brief to the Mines Ministers Conference this year, strongly recommended that these programs be continued and urged the Ministers to support renewal of the program. MDA's have successfully «plugged the gap» between the decrease in provincial and territorial geological field work and the ever present requirement for geological data. But MDA's are finite. As a short term, interim measure, they have achieved much. As a long-term solution, they are no substitute for a firm commitment from federal and provincial governments alike to establish satisfactory levels of geological activities.

Public Image

Perhaps the single most negative influence which affects the exploration and mining industry on a daily basis is our poor public image. Our industry tends to have a low profile and to sit low on the priority list of most government and public agendas. Among the John Does in the street, the bureaucrats in the upper echelons of government, and their political masters, there appears to be a very limited understanding of the contribution our industry makes to the quality of living and to the economy of our country. By many, we are seen merely as polluters of the environment, and as exploiters of precious, limited resources.

The danger here is that this popular perception acts to distort political judgement. It is no secret that there is pressure on politicians to make decisions which are politically safe. If the general view is that exploration and mining are undesirable activities then decisions and policies are likely to reflect this view. Needless to say, these kinds of decisions and policies are more likely to affect us negatively rather than positively and will outweigh any reasonable solutions that our industry proffers.

If the Canadian exploration and mining industry is to remain strong and healthy, we must lobby for government support and the introduction of policies that are at the same time conducive to the industry and the public good. In our view, the most effective way to achieve this is by improving our image and gaining public support for the industry.

To effect such a change is a project of very large proportions and with an unending agenda. It is far too large to be tackled by a single organization. Success will only come with coordinated national effort and cooperation between industry and government. We see government's vital role in this endeavor in the realm of education. The PDAC and The Mining Association of Canada have begun to address the problem and to map out a strategy. A national advisory committee has been struck with the mandate to identify programs and funds to initiate action. We consider that it is of vital importance to the health and wellbeing of our industry and to those associated with it.