



# Action Plan 2006

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## Status Report

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Reports on the activities of working groups arising from Action Plan 2006 of the Mines Ministers' Conference submitted for consideration at the 64<sup>th</sup> Mines Ministers' Conference

**Whistler, British Columbia • September 2007**



# Introduction

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The Status Reports contained hereunder reflect the actions taken on the major issues affecting the mining industry in Canada under the direction of the provincial, territorial and federal Ministers of Mines at the Mines Ministers' Conference 2006.

The reports were prepared either by working groups established by the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Mineral Industry (IGWG) or by officials responsible for a specific issue. Therefore, the views contained in the reports do not necessarily reflect those of IGWG as a whole.

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# National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative in Canada

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From MMC Action Plan 2005 – *Ministers endorsed the ongoing work of the National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative (NOAMI), in particular the development of:*

- *a portal site for a national inventory for inactive mine sites, and*
- *recommendations for the development of policies/legislation with respect to orphaned/abandoned mine-site remediation.*

*Ministers agreed to continue financial support for the work of NOAMI.*

## **BACKGROUND**

The legacy of orphaned/abandoned mines (O/AMs), with the associated environmental liability, human health concerns, and the financial costs of clean-up, continues to be a serious issue facing Canada and all Canadians.

Since 2002, Mines Ministers have signaled their commitment to address this serious issue with continued support for the National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative (NOAMI). NOAMI is a unique cooperative Canadian program that is guided by an advisory committee consisting of the mining industry, federal/provincial/territorial governments, environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), and Aboriginal Canadians.

NOAMI's role is to assess key issues and put forward recommendations to Mines Ministers concerning collaborative approaches and partnerships in the implementation of remediation programs for orphaned and abandoned mine sites in Canada. At their annual meeting in Whitehorse, Yukon, in 2006, Ministers agreed to support the ongoing activities of NOAMI, as long as human and financial resources permit.

More specifically, Ministers agreed to encourage their respective federal/provincial/territorial officials to participate in the October 2006 NOAMI-sponsored Explore Best Practices workshop. They also agreed to the development of a portal site for a national inventory of inactive mine sites, and recommended the development of a toolkit to guide jurisdictions contemplating policies/legislation with respect to orphaned/abandoned mine-site remediation.

## **INTERIM RESULTS**

The development of a Web-based national inventory of orphaned and abandoned mines is well under way. A second mandate was given to the Minerals and Mining Statistics Division of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) to complete the development of the working model. Federal, provincial and territorial participation is facilitated through existing data-sharing agreements with only a few additional requirements that include consent for public release of information and that access to present and future mine-site data be provided to NRCan to ensure the long-term maintenance and integrity of the portal. The national inventory will be launched in 2007.

A report on all legislation relevant to the remediation of orphaned/abandoned mine sites has been completed. It contains a synthesis of the jurisdictional analyses, including an assessment of gaps, limitations, barriers, and opportunities for remediation, along with a summary of observations. The final report will be released on CD-ROM in the Fall of 2007. Development of a toolkit of legislative approaches, to be used as a guide to assist jurisdictions contemplating policy/legislation with respect to O/AMs, is part of the workplan for 2007/08.

One recommendation from the multi-stakeholder workshop on Assessing Liabilities and Funding Options (November 2005) was the production of a guidance document or “toolkit” on funding options, outlining a series of approaches and illustrated with case studies. This would be a resource document for use by jurisdictions across Canada to help guide the establishment of potential funding options for the remediation of O/AMs. The report, *Rehabilitating Abandoned Mines in Canada: A Toolkit of Funding Options* (Cowan Minerals, 2006), was completed and released at a multi-stakeholder workshop hosted by NOAMI in the Fall of 2006. The report is posted on the NOAMI web site, along with the above-stated Proceedings and workshop report.

In October 2006, NOAMI hosted a multi-stakeholder workshop entitled Orphaned/Abandoned Mines: A Workshop to Explore Best Practices. The objective of the workshop was to explore and understand the best existing, emerging, and innovative practices relating to the management of O/AMs. The two-day workshop addressed key priorities including: setting priorities, public engagement and capacity building, partnership approaches, and applying best practices. This workshop, held in Winnipeg, returned to the site of the founding workshop in 2001 and provided an opportunity to review and validate the progress not only of NOAMI, but also of the various initiatives undertaken by federal/provincial/territorial (F/P/T) jurisdictions to address the issue since NOAMI was conceived. There was unqualified support from all stakeholders for the ongoing work of NOAMI and endorsement for the initiative to continue. Workshop proceedings are posted on the NOAMI web site at [www.abandoned-mines.org](http://www.abandoned-mines.org) and a CD of the proceedings and presentations is available from the Secretariat.

One recommendation arising from the Fall 2006 workshop was a community-based pilot project to focus on “Building the Capacity of Local Communities to Understand Abandoned Mines.” The objective of the project is to build capacity in areas such as environmental/chemical concerns, options for remediation, decision-making processes, and information on mining processes. Three diverse communities are to be engaged and site selection is in progress. The selected contractor is to make recommendations on material, both generic and site-specific. A Request for Proposal is being prepared.

The NOAMI Advisory Committee has also recommended that a communications strategy be prepared. This strategy would heighten awareness of the issues of O/AMs and the work completed by NOAMI, as well as the initiatives undertaken by F/P/T jurisdictions in addressing this issue. An Annual Report was suggested as part of a good communications strategy. A five-year retrospective is planned for the first report; thereafter, annual reports would be prepared. The report would be structured as a public communication tool rather than as technical information. Discussions have started on the type of information, the layout of the report, etc., that could be considered for NOAMI.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Respective jurisdictions are on course to finalize the agreements to integrate (if they have not already done so) their datasets to produce a nation-wide inventory.

The ongoing work of NOAMI will include the development of:

- A guidance document (“toolkit”) to support jurisdictions in the establishment of potential policy/legislative approaches for the remediation of O/AMs;
- a communications strategy to highlight the activities of NOAMI and the progress of F/P/T jurisdictions in support of O/AMs remediation across the country; and
- a community-based pilot project, based on results from the Winnipeg 2006 Best Practices workshop, to address community capacity in dealing with issues associated with the management of orphaned/abandoned mine sites.