Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (File # NR-175-2019)

On September 17, 2019, the Department of Natural Resources received your request for access to the following records/information:

Any briefing materials, Q&A documents, Key Messages, etc prepared in the last year relating to Search Minerals

We are providing access to the most information possible but have made redactions in accordance with Sections 29(1)(a) and 35(1)(d)(g) of ATIPPA, 2015 as follows:

29. (1)(a) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information that would reveal advice, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for a public body or minister;

35. (1)(d) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information which could reasonably be expected to disclose information, the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to result in the premature disclosure of a proposal or project or in significant loss or gain to a third party.

35. (1)(g) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information which could reasonably be expected to disclose information, the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to prejudice the financial or economic interest of the government of the province or a public body.

As set out in section 42 of the Act you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review the department’s decision to provide access to the requested information. A request to the Commissioner must be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner. Your request should identify your concerns with the department’s
response and why you are requesting a review.

The request for review may be addressed to the Information and Privacy Commissioner is as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
2 Canada Drive
P.O. Box 13004, Stn. A
St. John’s, NL. A1B 3V8

Telephone: (709) 729-6309
Toll-Free: 1-877-729-6309
Facsimile: (709) 729-6500

Pursuant to section 52 of the Act, you may also appeal directly to the Supreme Court Trial Division within 15 business days after receiving the department’s decision.

Please be advised that responsive records will be published following a 72 hour period after the response is sent electronically to you or five business days in the case where records are mailed to you. It is the goal to have the responsive records posted to the Completed Access to Information Requests website within one business day following the applicable period of time. Please note that requests for personal information will not be posted online.

For further details about how an access to information request is processed, please refer to the Access to Information Policy and Procedures Manual at http://www.atipp.gov.nl.ca/info/index.html.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 709-729-0463 or rhynes@gov.nl.ca.

Sincerely,

Rod Hynes

Rod Hynes
ATIPP Coordinator
Information Note
Department of Natural Resources

Title: Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Industry Overview

Issue: To provide a status update on the Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Industry

Background and Current Status:
- The gross value of mineral shipments for Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) in 2017 was estimated to be $3.6 billion. The gross value is forecast to be $3.0 billion in 2018. The decrease can be primarily attributed to a reduction in the value of iron ore shipments.

- The NL Mining industry generated an estimated 5,145 person years of employment in 2017 and expects to generate 5,527 person years of employment in 2018. The increase can be primarily attributed to an expected increase in construction employment related to the proceeding Voisey’s Bay Underground Mine Expansion Project.

- Producing mines in the province are highlighted in the table below:

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- As part of the Phase 3, The Way Forward: Building for Our Future, NR, in collaboration with the mining industry and community stakeholders, is developing a strategic framework for growing the provincial mining industry. Engagement sessions have been completed with specific stakeholders including Mining Industry NL, NL Prospectors Association, and other government departments. Broader consultation sessions will be completed by the first week of October and will be held in Labrador City, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, St. John’s, Springdale and Marystown. NR is targeting a release of the Mineral Strategy, pending completion of aboriginal consultations, at the annual Mineral Resources Review being held November 1, 2018.

- On June 11, 2018, Vale announced that it will be proceeding with the Voisey’s Bay Mine Expansion Project. The project represents close to $2 billion in capital expenditures by Vale and will provide 16,000 person years of employment during the five years of construction, peaking at 4,800 person years in 2020. First ore is expected by April 2021.

- Tacora Resources Inc. has acquired the former Wabush Scully mine in Wabush, Labrador. In a Preliminary Economic Assessment (May 2018) the Company estimated a capital
expenditure of $210 million to reactivate the mine. Tacora has been released from environmental assessment and is currently attempting to raise capital.

- The Wabush 3 project, owned by the Iron Ore Company of Canada, was delayed due to a nine-week work stoppage which ended on May 28, 2018. IOC plans to officially open Wabush 3 on September 25, 2018.

- Howse Minerals Limited, a subsidiary of Tata Steel Minerals Canada, has been given Mining Act approval for the Howse project in the Menihek area of Labrador.

- Red Moon Resources Inc. had its first shipment from the Ace Gypsum Deposit near St. George's in August 2018. The mine will employ 15 people on a seasonal basis with an initial production level of 100,000 – 250,000 tonnes per year ramping up to 300,000 – 450,000 tonnes per year. The life of the mine is expected to be 10 years.

- Alderon Iron Ore Corp. continues to advance the Kami project located in Labrador West. The Company expects to release a new Feasibility Study in Q4 2018.

- Projects in the advanced stages of exploration in the province are listed in the table below:

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Analysis:

- Over the past year, iron ore prices have fallen since peaking at US$79.90 per tonne at the end of February 2018. As of September 17, 2018, the price of iron ore is US$69.25 per tonne and the average price over the past month is US$66.82 per tonne.

- There exists increased demand for high quality iron ore in China as the country is dedicated to reducing its emission levels.

- Nickel prices have increased slightly over the past year peaking at US$15,750 per tonne in June 2018. As of September 17, 2018, the price of nickel is US$12,235 per tonne and the monthly average is US$12,863 per tonne.

- Copper prices have declined over the past year and as of September 17, 2018 sit at US$2.66 per pound.

Prepared/approved by: G. Taylor / A. Smith
Ministerial Approval: September 17, 2018
Information Note
Department of Natural Resources

Title: Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Industry Overview

Issue: To provide a status update on the Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Industry

Background and Current Status:

Key Messages
- NL has a wide variety of mineral commodities currently being produced including: iron ore (Labrador Trough), nickel, copper and cobalt (Voisey’s Bay); gold (Baie Verte Peninsula); fluor spar (St. Lawrence); limestone and dolomite (Port aux Port); and gypsum (St. George’s Bay).

- Newfoundland and Labrador possesses world class deposits for iron ore, nickel and base metals which have attracted investment by leading international mining companies, including Rio Tinto, Tata Steel, Vale and HBIS.

- Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to improving the competitiveness of the province in order to attract mineral exploration and development investment. The province is partnering with industry and community stakeholders to develop a sustainable and competitive framework for continued exploration and mining growth.

- There is a long and successful history of iron ore mining in Labrador which has, and continues to benefit from:
  - availability of Hydro-electric power at very competitive rates;
  - a safe and mining friendly jurisdiction;
  - access to a skilled and committed workforce; and
  - a robust regulatory framework which ensures sustainability in the region.

- There is value in use of iron ore from the Labrador Trough given their high grade and purity which will help to reduce emissions and meet environmental regulations.

Chinese Investment
- In 2010 Alderon concluded a business deal with Altius Minerals to explore and develop the Kami Iron Ore deposit located near Wabush, Labrador West.

- In March 2013, HBIS Group Co. Ltd. (formerly Hebei Iron & Steel Group) contributed C$119.9 million in exchange for a 25% interest in the Kami Limited Partnership which was established to own the Kami Project. Alderon has the remaining 75% interest.

- Alderon has three strategic partners in the Kami Project including the HBIS Group, Glencore and Liberty Metals and Mining Holdings.
  - HBIS Group, China’s second largest steelmaker, has invested $182.2 million (including the $119.9 million referenced above) in the project and will purchase 60 percent of annual production.
  - Glencore, a large globally diversified natural resource company, has an offtake agreement to purchase the remaining 40 percent of annual production.
  - Liberty Metals and Mining Holdings (LMM) had invested $49.2 million in equity.
- In March 2018 Altius acquired all of LMM’s common shares in Alderon. Following disposition of the common shares, LMM holds a $22 million secured convertible note and warrants. Assuming conversion of the convertible note and warrants, LMM beneficially holds approximately 9.86% of the outstanding Shares.

- As of July 16, 2018, Altius Minerals Corporation owns approximately 39% of Alderon Iron Ore Corp.’s issued and outstanding common shares.

- Beaver Brook Antimony Mine (BBAM), near Glenwood, is owned by China Minmetals Non-Ferrous Metals. Operations were suspended at the antimony mine in January 2013. The operation has been placed on care and maintenance with nine full-time employees working to ensure the site remains in good condition and that the underground workings are kept dewatered.

- BBAM has recently indicated that local management would be seeking support to restart operations with a decision expected in the near term. (Business confidential)

**General**
- The gross value of mineral shipments for Newfoundland and Labrador in 2017 was estimated to be $3.6 billion. The gross value is forecast to be $3.0 billion in 2018. The decrease can be primarily attributed to a reduction in the value of iron ore shipments.

- The Newfoundland and Labrador mining industry generated an estimated 5,145 person years of employment in 2017 and expects to generate 5,527 person years of employment in 2018. The increase can be primarily attributed to an expected increase in construction employment related to the Voisey’s Bay Underground Mine Expansion Project.

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- The Iron Ore Company of Canada officially opened the Wabush 3 (Moss Pit) project on September 25, 2018.

- Howse Minerals Limited, a subsidiary of Tata Steel Minerals Canada, has been given Mining Act approval for the Howse project in the Menilhek area of Labrador. Tata Steel Minerals Canada will complete construction of their $700 million processing plant by the end of 2018.

- Red Moon Resources Inc. had its first shipment from the Ace Gypsum Deposit near St. George’s in August 2018. The mine will employ 15 people on a seasonal basis with an initial production level of 100,000 – 250,000 tonnes per year ramping up to 300,000 – 450,000 tonnes per year. The life of the mine is expected to be 10 years.

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Analysis:
- As of October 24, 2018, the price of iron ore is US$75.90 per tonne and the average price over the past month is US$70.92 per tonne.
- There exists increased demand for high quality iron ore in China as the country is dedicated to reducing its emission levels. As a result, the high grade and low levels of impurities in iron ore from the Labrador trough has attracted a significant premium over market prices.
- Nickel prices have increased slightly over the past year peaking at US$15,750 per tonne in June 2018. As of October 24, 2018, the price of nickel is US$12,295 per tonne and the monthly average is US$12,535 per tonne.

- Copper prices have declined over the past year and as of October 24, 2018 sit at US$2.82 per pound.

Prepared/approved by: G. Taylor / A. Smith / P. Canning / J. Cowan
Ministerial Approval: October 25, 2018
Meeting Note
Department of Natural Resources
Meeting with Search Minerals Inc.
Monday March 4, 2019, 11:00 AM
Fairmont Royal York Hotel, PEI Room, Main Mezzanine Level

Attendees:
Greg Andrews, President and Chief Executive Officer, Director, Search Minerals Inc.
Dr. David Dreisinger, Ph.D., Director & Vice President Metallurgy
Minister Siobhan Coady
Perry Canning, ADM, Mines

Purpose of Meeting:
• Search Minerals Inc. requested a meeting with Minister Coady to provide an update on development of its rare earth elements camps in Labrador.

Background:
• Search Minerals Inc. (through its wholly-owned subsidiary Alterra Resources Inc.) has three Rare Earth Elements (REE) camps in Labrador with its primary focus on the Port Hope Simpson (PHS) Critical Rare Earth Element District in South East Labrador. This District is home to the company’s flagship Foytrot resource property and also includes Deep Fox Discovery and Fox Meadow Discovery. The other two camps are Henley Harbour on the southern coast of Labrador and the Red Wine Complex in central Labrador.

• Search has filed The Foytrot Rare Earth Element Mine for provincial (December, 2017) and federal (January, 2018) environmental assessment. An environmental assessment committee has been assigned and Search is required to submit an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project. EIS guidelines have been provided to the company and Search has initiated environmental base line studies.

• In April 2016, Search released an updated Preliminary Economic Assessment (PEA) on the Foytrot project. The PEA evaluated an open pit and underground mine development producing 10 tonnes of rare earth oxide per day. The potential mine would have a 14 year mine life and employ 140 people during the 8 year open pit stage and 220 during the 6 year underground phase. The PEA estimated an initial capital cost of $152 million ($232 million including sustaining and closure capital).

• During the open pit operations, mining activity will occur 6 months of the year (May to October), at a rate of 2,000 tonnes per day. The underground phase of the mining project will run year round at a rate of 1,000 tonnes per day. The rare earth oxide would be shipped out of the province for final separation of the REEs.

• The pilot plant project was successfully completed in February 2017 and produced a high purity (98.99%) mixed rare earth oxide (REO) concentrate for refining. An advantage to the extractive method is a dry stackable residue which is more environmentally friendly.

• In November 2018, Search announced that it will receive further research and development (R&D) funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation ($306,537 non-repayable) and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency ($300,000 conditionally repayable) to assist in the refinement and optimization of the Direct Extraction Hydrometallurgical Process. Search will contribute an additional $165,000 for a total cost of approximately $806,000.
• In 2018, Search initiated phase one of a drill program on its Deep Fox Discovery and in December reported encouraging assays results. The Deep Fox drill program has confirmed higher grade mineralization and higher true widths than the Foxtrot deposit. The company states "with the anticipation of phase two results, we will be able to prepare a resource estimate for Deep Fox with the ultimate goal to prepare an updated preliminary economic assessment." Phase two is complete and results are being analyzed.

**Agenda item #1: Executive Update**

• Search Executive will provide an update on the progress for the Foxtrot property

**Analysis**

• As part of the R&D Direct Extraction Hydrometallurgical Process, Search is looking to further pilot plant optimization based on the recommendations from SGS Canada. With results from this study, Search will explore the opportunity to build and operate a demonstration plant that would provide substantially more REO concentrate for further refining and identify qualifications required to secure end-users or an off-take agreement.

• In 2015, Search Minerals completed an engineering study on a metallurgical pilot plant in Southern Labrador which evaluated the commercial feasibility of innovative technologies for the recovery and refining of rare earth elements from Labrador. The $1.9 million study was partially funded by Research and Development Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador ($750,000) and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency ($500,000 conditionally repayable). As a result, Search now has a Direct Extraction Hydrometallurgical Process (US Patent Pending).

**Potential Speaking Points**

• Government would like to thank Search for their support and initiative in spearheading the Mining the Future 2030 document.

**Proposed Actions**

• None at this time.

**Prepared/Approved by:**

B. Lawlor / K. Bradbury / A. Smith / P. Canning

**Ministerial Approval:**

**February 22, 2019**

**Attachments:** Biographies
Biographies

Greg Andrews
President and Chief Executive Officer, Director, Search Minerals Inc.

Mr. Andrews received his is Bachelor of Commerce, Finance from the University of Calgary. He has over 20 years of experience in strategic planning, financial and administrative management consulting to public and private companies. He has held positions as General Manager of a Registered Portfolio Management company, General Manager of a Private Family Office and President of a wholesale distribution company. Mr. Andrews has also held various directorships in TSX Venture listed companies since 1993, including those involved in mining, oil and gas, technology and biotechnology.

Dr. David Dreisinger, Ph.D
Director & Vice President Metallurgy

Dr. Dreisinger holds the position of Industrial Research Chair, Hydrometallurgy at the University of British Columbia where he has been a Professor since 1988. He has over 250 publications to his credit and has been involved as a process consultant for metallurgical companies for many years. He has participated in 19 U.S. patents for work in areas such as pressure leaching, ion exchange removal of impurities from process solutions, use of thiosulfate as an alternative to cyanide in gold leaching, and leach-electrolysis treatment of copper matte. Dr. Dreisinger also co-invented the Mt. Gordon Copper Process for copper recovery from sulfide ores and the Sepon Copper Process for copper recovery from sulfidic-clayey ores. He has been actively involved in the development of the proposed metallurgical flow sheet for Boleo and is one of the recognized experts in the world in the area of hydrometallurgy. He is also a director of Polymet Mining Corp. and Search Minerals and holds officer positions with Search Minerals Inc. and Trimetals Mining Inc.
Information Note
Department of Natural Resources

Title: Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Industry Overview

Issue: Overview of the status of the mining industry in Newfoundland and Labrador for the 2019 Energy and Mines Ministers' Conference

Background and Current Status:
- NL has a wide variety of mineral commodities currently being produced such as iron ore (Labrador Trough), nickel, copper and cobalt (Voisey’s Bay); gold (Baie Verte Peninsula); fluorspar (St. Lawrence).

- The gross value of mineral shipments for Newfoundland and Labrador in 2018 was $2.87 billion with a forecasted value of $3.97 billion for 2019.

- The NL mining industry average employment was 5,726 person years in 2018 with a forecasted value of 6,332 person years in 2019. Mining construction employment included in these values for 2018 and 2019 are 962 and 1,231 respectively, the increase is mainly attributed to Voisey's Bay Underground Mine Expansion.

- Iron, nickel, and copper contribute 90% of the value of shipments from the province with gold, cobalt, silver, industrial minerals, stone, sand and gravel contributing the remainder.

- Producing mines in the province are summarized in the table below:

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- Construction at Vale Newfoundland and Labrador's Voisey's Bay Mine Expansion resumed in June 2018. The project represents close to $2 billion in capital expenditures by Vale. There will be 16,000 direct and indirect person years of employment during the five years of construction, peaking at 4,800 person years in 2020. First ore production from underground is expected by April 2021 with an extended mine life of 15 years.

- The Iron Ore Company of Canada, began production at Wabush 3 pit, renamed the Moss Pit, on September 25, 2018. This $79 million investment will increase ore output by about five million tonnes per year and extend the life of the mine by 12 years.
- Tacora Resources Inc., an iron ore mining and development company based out of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, secured financing for the former Wabush Scully mine, renamed Tacora Mine, in Wabush, Labrador in November 2018. Tacora's first shipment of ore arrived at Point Noire on July 1, 2019. The Reactivation of the Tacora Mine will create up to 260 jobs during operations.

- Canada Fluorspar made its first shipment of 4,700 tonnes of acid-grade fluorspar in August, 2018. Project capital costs are $250 million. Average yearly employment will be 225 person years.

- Beaver Brook Antimony mine has reached commercial production after being in care and maintenance for several years. Mining began on March 26, 2019 with mill start up commencing on April 22, 2019. Production is ahead of schedule and the stibnite concentrate is a very high grade ore in the vicinity of 60-65 per cent. First shipment of concentrate took place on June 19, 2019.

- Tata Steel Minerals Canada Limited has fully commissioned its $700 million wet processing facility and is ramping the plant up to full capacity of 700 tonnes per hour of concentrate production.

- Alderon Iron Ore Corp. continues to advance their Kami project located in Labrador West. In September 2018, Alderon released a Feasibility Study which demonstrates an average annual production of 7.84 Million tonnes over a 23 year mine life. The project has a capital cost of US$982.41 million and Alderon is now focusing on financing.

- Search Minerals Inc. has filed The Foxtrot Rare Earth Element Mine for provincial (December, 2017) and federal (January, 2018) environmental assessment. An environmental assessment committee has been assigned and Search is required to submit an environmental impact statement for which guidelines have been provided.

- Projects in advanced stages of exploration in the Province:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marathon Gold Corporation</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Valentine Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime Resources Corp.</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>King's Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Minerals Inc.</td>
<td>Rare Earth Elements</td>
<td>Port Hope Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matador Mining Ltd.</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Cape Ray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchans Resources Limited</td>
<td>Zinc-Lead-Copper-Silver-Gold</td>
<td>Buchans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NorZinc Ltd.</td>
<td>Zinc-Lead-Copper-Silver-Gold</td>
<td>South Tally Pond/Lemarchant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
- On January 25, 2019, the Brumadinho dam disaster at Vale's Feijao iron ore mine in Brazil took place. Spot iron ore prices rose from US$75 per tonne to US$95 per tonne in the weeks following. The price further increased with the news that Vale would not be back in production for a period of time.

- As of July 2, the price was US$124.20 per tonne and the average price for the month of June was US$110.14 per tonne.
Iron ore from the Labrador Trough generally receive premiums for higher grade and low contaminant concentrate and pellets.

• High quality ore is in demand from China due to their efforts to reduce emissions.

• Nickel prices have fluctuated over the past year peaking at US$15,255 per tonne in June 2018 and bottomed out late January at US$10,440 per tonne. Prices rose again until March when they reached US$13,610 and have declined since then. The average price for the month of June was US$11,989 per tonne. Nickel prices are closely related to demand from stainless steel producers who account for about two-thirds of total demand.

• Copper prices were just over US$3.00 per pound this time last year, they have remained steady ranging from US$2.50 to US$2.97 per pound indicating that the demand has been sluggish. Current price is US$2.68 per pound as of July 2 and the average price for the month of June- July 2 was is $2.67.

• In April, 2019 Search Minerals Inc. has been granted a patent (US Patent 10,273,562, Issued April 30, 2019) for acid leaching of rare earth minerals using the Search Minerals Direct Extraction Process. The company is also undergoing its Pilot Plant Optimization program is at the facilities of SGS Canada whereby parameters of its demonstration plant will be set.

Prepared/approved by: B. Lawlor / T. Walters / A. Smith
Ministerial Approval: July 10, 2019