

Submission
No 72

INQUIRY INTO BENEFICIAL AND PRODUCTIVE POST- MINING LAND USE

Organisation: Natural Resources Canada

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To the Honourable Emily Suvaal, MP and Chair, Standing Committee on State Development:

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to your inquiry into beneficial and productive post-mining land use. Canada's climate for mine remediation and regulatory context are quite different than Australia's. Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments have differing roles, authorities and regulations for beneficial and productive post-mining land use from those of Australia. Differences in the Canadian context make it difficult to answer the questions identified through the Standing Committee's process. Canada's Department of Natural Resources offers the following information on our work on post-mining land use for the Committee's consideration.

Mining has a long history in Canada, and Canadians expect that exploration, extraction, processing, and other mining related activities include measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts on the environment and human health. They also expect that lands once used for mining be restored to a more natural state or be used for alternate development activities. Demonstrating respect for nature and communities while meeting these expectations helps to foster positive public perceptions about the industry, public trust, and continued support to responsibly develop natural resources.

Canada is a global leader in research and development to address environmental issues caused by legacy mine sites. Mineral development, including mine closure and reclamation, falls within provincial and territorial jurisdiction. However, the federal government has constitutional duties that impact mining, such as the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*, the *Fisheries Act*, and the *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*. In the North, responsibility for the remediation and future prevention of contaminated sites is shared, and the Government of Canada (via [Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada](#)) is responsible for mine liabilities and reclamation of mines that were orphaned or abandoned prior to the [devolution](#) of powers to the respective territory.

The federal government continues to be an active partner and works with provinces and territories on issues related to orphaned and abandoned mine sites, mine remediation, and post-mine land use.

Since the 1990s, the Government of Canada and provincial and territorial governments have made legislative and regulatory improvements for mine closure planning to prevent mines from being orphaned and abandoned and establish requirements for their closure and remediation. Orphaned and abandoned mine (OAM) sites are not well documented with respect to their numbers or their associated physical, health, and environmental impacts and liabilities. As such, research, collaboration, and information sharing is necessary to enable sound decision-making, cost-efficient planning, and sustainable reclamation. National, multi-stakeholder collaboration is also necessary to ensure transparency of decision-making and access to information by governments, industry, Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders.

The National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative (NOAMI) was established in 2002 as a national multi-stakeholder initiative that brought together federal, provincial, and territorial governments, the Canadian mining industry, non-governmental organizations, and Indigenous organizations to address issues and make recommendations related to OAM sites in Canada. NOAMI significantly contributed knowledge about the state of OAM in Canada, helped to build capacity, and influenced policy on the remediation of legacy sites.

As part of the [Canadian Minerals and Metals Plan](#) (CMMP), a collaborative, multi-stakeholder plan aimed at supporting the competitiveness and long-term success of Canada's minerals and metals sector, a pan-Canadian initiative was launched to re-imagine NOAMI in light of emerging issues such as climate change. In 2022, NOAMI was dissolved after determining that it had successfully met its original objectives, including building a national inventory of OAM sites; engaging communities; identifying funding models, ownership and liability issues; and identifying areas where research could help jurisdictions advance remediation and prevent new occurrences. The Initiative was replaced by an Annual Orphaned and Abandoned Mines Workshop.

Inaugurated in 2023, the Annual Orphaned and Abandoned Mines (OAM) Workshop is hosted by the CMMP Secretariat and the Task Team on Environment under the Mines Intergovernmental Working Group (Mines IGWG). It is a multi-day, working-level workshop aimed at facilitating information sharing, diverse and inclusive engagement, and broad collaboration among governments, industry, Indigenous Peoples, non-government organizations, and other partners and shareholders on shared challenges, lessons learned, and success stories related to OAM remediation. The 1st Annual OAM Workshop focused on Targeted Land Use Planning through Collaboration and Innovation and included sessions on land use planning and design, collaboration with communities, particularly the historical relationship with Indigenous Peoples, innovative approaches that applied circular economy concepts and created value from mine tailings, and environmental considerations.

The 2nd Annual OAM Workshop will continue to build on last year's discussion. With the theme of Foundations for Success: Building Capacity and Developing Best Practices, it will explore topics that include best practices for effective remediation planning and implementation; creating strong, effective, and inclusive partnerships between various stakeholders; addressing capacity constraints, developing supportive relationships, and providing opportunities to Indigenous partners; and potential economic opportunities and partnerships for reclamation, such as in the realm of mine waste valorisation, recovery and reprocessing, as well as an examination of associated considerations, risks, and challenges.

Additionally, the CMMP included a target designed to advance a pan-Canadian Mining Value from Waste research program, which is led by the Department's CanmetMINING laboratory. The program conducts leading-edge research to make Canada's mining industry innovative and sustainable, in partnership with industry, academic researchers and other government laboratories. This includes research on new technologies, including technologies that make use of bioleaching to recover critical minerals from mine waste. CMMP partners and stakeholders are undertaking actions to reduce waste by providing targeted support for research, development, and innovation; further integrate circular economy principles into the mining cycle; and collaborate to recommend best practices for reclaiming mine sites.

We welcome members of the Committee and other interested parties to attend the 2nd Annual OAM Workshop, which will take place in hybrid format (in-person and virtually) October 23-25, 2024. Should you wish to be added to the distribution list, please contact the CMMP Secretariat at [\[redacted\]](#). More information about the workshop will be made available on [\[redacted\]](#) later this summer. We also welcome you to reach out to the CMMP Secretariat to explore other opportunities for information sharing and collaboration.

We look forward to future opportunities to collaborate with the Australian government. Thank you for the opportunity for Natural Resources Canada to share some insights into our work on beneficial and productive post-mining land use.

Sincerely,
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