



Context

Many countries around the globe rely on mineral resources to drive their industrial output. Nunavik is rich in mineral resources. The region's mineral exploration and mining potential was recognized in the *Sanarrutik Partnership Agreement on Economic and Community Development in Nunavik* (2002). Mining represents a significant force for generating training, jobs, contracts and investment opportunities.

Currently in the region, there are two operating mines (Raglan opened in 1997 and Nunavik Nickel is scheduled to open in 2013), several mining projects at various stages, and more than 72,000 mineral exploration claims (i.e. about 30% of all the claims staked in Québec). Through the Plan Nord and the Québec Mineral Strategy, the development of mining potential in the north of the province is strongly endorsed by the Québec government.

A Few of the Challenges

Inuit depend on renewable resources, such as caribou, arctic char and waterfowl, for their subsistence, but the habitats of harvested wildlife are often the same areas coveted for mineral exploration and mining projects.

Mineral resources are not renewable, but the exploitation of some of the region's mineral deposits could create employment for more than 50 years each.

Many mining development activities are being conducted in the region without contact with nearby communities and regional organizations.

The region's ecosystems are fragile and especially vulnerable to climate change and industrial activities.

Environmental protection legislation is not always effectively enforced at all stages of development: mineral exploration, mining operations and closures.

No educational institution in the region has dedicated education programs in geosciences and mining technologies to help Nunavimmiut obtain employment in mineral exploration and mining projects.

Solutions and Priorities

The guaranteed Aboriginal rights of the Nunavik Inuit and the Sanarrutik Agreement will help ensure dutiful mining development. Specifically, Section 2.3 of the Sanarrutik Agreement is a commitment by Québec to encourage and facilitate the signing of agreements between the Makivik Corporation and mining companies concerning remedial measures and project monitoring, financial arrangements, and employment and contracts.

Establish a mining policy to clearly set out, from a regional perspective, the conditions for mineral resource development under existing land regimes, agreements and legislation, and compel the mining industry to participate in sustainable social, environmental and economic development.

Improve communications between the mining industry, the communities and regional organizations on mineral exploration and mining projects.

Strengthen community participation in mineral exploration and mining projects to enhance the benefits of economic and sustainable development. The Tamatumani training and employment initiative is successfully involving Nunavimmiut in jobs at the Raglan mine. This initiative could be reproduced for other mine projects and formal training centres in geosciences and mining technologies must be set up in the communities. As well, mining service companies managed and owned by Nunavik Inuit must be fostered.

Ensure balance between development of mining potential with protection for the ecological systems that are vital to continued subsistence harvesting and the Inuit traditional way of life.

Establish a commission to prepare and implement a regional plan for integrated land and natural resource development that, based on the objectives of regional stakeholders, can guide the use of resources to create wealth.

Create and implement a strategic mineral development plan to ensure an environmentally sound and sustainable mining industry. The plan would serve as a management tool regarding legislative regimes and partnerships between the industry, the communities and regional organizations.

Create and implement a strategic transportation and energy infrastructure development plan to contribute to mining and community development. This action would eventually involve connection to the Québec electrical power grid as well as road or rail links.

Establish an adequate jurisdictional framework for mining and related industrial development.

Expand and upgrade geosciences data on Nunavik by promoting knowledge acquisition projects.

Discussion

Québec's economic wealth depends on the exploitation of natural resources. Nunavik has enormous mineral and hydroelectric energy potentials. At the same time, our environment is fragile and we depend on renewable resources, such as the wildlife. A regional mining policy is needed to clearly state how and under what conditions Nunavik's mineral resources will be shared.

