



MEDIA ADVISORY

Mineral Exploration Sector to Address UNESCO Mission to Flathead

Vancouver, B.C. – September 18, 2009 – Gavin C. Dirom, President & CEO of the Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia (AME BC), will represent B.C.'s mineral exploration sector in a meeting with the UNESCO-led mission to Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and the Flathead on Friday, September 25, 2009, in Fernie, B.C. In August, AME BC sent a letter to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (see backgrounder).

Mr. Dirom will be available to speak to the media, and may be reached at + 1 778-233-6459 for an interview.

About AME BC:

AME BC represents thousands of members including geoscientists, prospectors, engineers, entrepreneurs, exploration companies, suppliers, mineral producers, and associations who are engaged in mineral exploration in BC and throughout the world. Through leadership, advocacy, and partnerships, AME BC promotes a healthy environment and business climate for the mineral exploration industry. AME BC is the predominant voice of mineral exploration in British Columbia.

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BACKGROUNDER

August 6, 2009

Mr. David A. Walden
Secretary General
Canadian Commission for UNESCO
350 Albert Street, P.O. Box 1047
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8

Dear Mr. Walden,

Re: UNESCO World Heritage Committee Decision: 33 COM 7B.22

I am writing you on behalf of the Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia (AME BC). AME BC represents over 3,500 individual and 300 corporate members including geoscientists, prospectors, engineers, entrepreneurs, exploration companies, suppliers, mineral producers, and associations who are engaged in mineral exploration in BC and throughout the world. Through leadership, partnerships, and advocacy, AME BC promotes a healthy environment and business climate for the mineral exploration industry. AME BC is the predominant voice of mineral exploration in British Columbia.

At the recent 33rd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Seville, Spain, the Committee issued the above-referenced decision. The decision is with regard to lands bordering Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park in an area of southeastern British Columbia known as the Flathead.

The decision specifically calls for Canada to invite a “*joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN monitoring mission to take place as soon as possible to evaluate and provide recommendations on the requirements for ensuring the protection of the property’s Outstanding Universal Value...*” The decision furthermore requires that a report be filed with the World Heritage Centre by February 2010, “*including status of all mining and energy development proposals in the Flathead Valley...*”

It must be pointed out that the decision by the World Heritage Committee was made based on evidence submitted by a limited number of non-governmental organizations. No information or evidence was requested from people living and working in the region or any other stakeholder. Nor was information sought from the local Aboriginal people, the Ktunaxa.

It must be clarified that British Columbia’s East Kootenays, the region in which the Flathead is located, presently has over 16% of its land base in protected areas. An additional 11.3% of the land base is designated “special resource management zone” where industrial development or natural resource extraction is extremely limited, if at all tolerated.

British Columbia has gone through extensive land use consultations over the past decades. These were consultations which included all interested parties. It was through these difficult negotiations that the current protected and special areas were designated. Consensus-based land use planning determined that the Flathead should be open for mineral exploration subject to existing rigorous provincial and federal environmental assessment processes.

As British Columbians, we welcome international scrutiny of our land use planning and our provincial and federal environmental assessment and permitting processes. We believe they are among the best in the world and include all interested parties. Their outcomes are soundly defensible. As a case in point, there is one proposed coal mining project in the Flathead, which after more than four years, is still in pre-assessment at the British Columbia government’s Environmental Assessment Office (EAO). This clearly demonstrates that existing regulation is stringent, and that the due environmental assessment process is occurring.

The Flathead, while a beautiful place like most of British Columbia, is not a pristine wilderness. The area was extensively logged in past decades. Additional industrial activity such as aggregate mining has taken place with minimal impact. The Flathead remains a beautiful and wild place even after over 50 years of shared use—and possibly as a result of that shared use.

If any “monitoring mission” is to take place, we believe that all impacted parties should be encouraged to participate, particularly given that the mission was based on input from a select number of self-appointed organizations acting on their own. We request your assistance in ensuring the UNESCO mission includes consultations and interviews with local residents, the mineral exploration and mining sector, the forestry sector, First Nations, local and regional government representatives, and others. In absence of such consultation, the mission will lack legitimacy.

Sustainability is about the environment, but it is also about sustaining culture, economy, and the other important social elements of a society. I enclose a recent media release from the British Columbia Wildlife Federation regarding the Flathead that makes this point clearly [see http://www.bcdf.bc.ca/media/press_releases/2009/02.06.2009.html].

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this proposed mission.

Sincerely,

Gavin C. Dirom, M.Sc., P.Ag.
President & Chief Executive Officer
Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia