

Greater Sudbury

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Chamber joins fight for mining revenues

BY DENIS ST. PIERRE
The Sudbury Star

The Greater Sudbury Chamber of commerce is preparing to weigh in on the city's demand for more revenue from resource taxes collected by the senior levels of government.

The chamber has created a task force to examine the findings of a 64-page report released in February by city council's advisory panel on municipal mining revenues.

After months of study, the advisory panel published a detailed argument on the city's need for a larger share of the tax revenues generated by the local mining industry.

Panel members included former Inco vice-president Jose Blanco, former provincial

Strikes task force to support city's quest for tax money

finance minister Floyd Laughren and international Steelworkers president Leo Gerard.

The major recommendation from the advisory panel's report is a call for the province to negotiate with the city to establish a new resource revenue-sharing system that will provide "predictable and sustainable revenue" for the municipality.

Blanco — the advisory panel's chairman — discussed the group's report last month with chamber officials, who were intrigued by the document, said chamber president and CEO Debbi Nicholson.

"Subsequent to that we struck a small task force to review the panel findings and

come up with our own recommendations," Nicholson said.

The chamber's task force consists of representatives of Vale Inco and Xstrata Nickel — Angie Robertson and Mark Trivisono, respectively

— as well as Mark Weiman, a local chartered accountant, and André Dumais, a manager at Bestech Engineering. Dumais was also a member of city council's advisory panel on mining revenues.

The chamber has yet to

arrive at an official position on the mining revenues debate.

But the business group recognizes the serious challenges facing the municipal government, particularly crumbling infrastructure, Nicholson said.

"I think we acknowledge that there are huge ramifications for our community. The nickel eventually will run out and we need to establish our community now, for that day," she said.

"We know the (property tax) assessment revenue the city receives from the mining industry is decreasing as a total percentage of their assessment. So how do you address that?"

"We know the impact the mining industry has on the community, both good and bad, and we know the state of our infrastructure."

"And moving forward and building our community as a place where people want to invest and want to live and raise a family and open businesses and employ people, we need to have that infrastructure in place."

The chamber's task force is expected to present its report and recommendations to the organization's board of directors next month.

The chamber's board will notify the city of its position on the issue and if advisable also will lobby senior levels of government, Nicholson said.

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