

Community rallies to salvage mining centre

BY DENIS ST. PIERRE
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A committee of mining and business leaders has been created to lobby the federal government to reconsider its denial of funding to a fledgling research centre in Sudbury.

The committee was created Thursday during a meeting called by Sudbury MPP Rick Bartolucci in response to the federal government's rejection of a funding application by the Centre of Excellence in Mining Innovation. The meeting, held at CEMI's offices on the Laurentian University campus, featured Bartolucci, CEMI chief executive Peter Kaiser, Mayor John

Rodriguez, representatives of Xstrata Nickel, Vale Inco, Laurentian and the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

The group opted to form a four-member committee, free of political representation, to lobby the federal Conservative government to support CEMI. The committee will include Kaiser and representatives of Xstrata, Vale Inco and the chamber of commerce.



Bartolucci

See CEMI / A4

CEMI: must convince feds of centre's value

Continued from A1

The group's spokesman will be Mike Romaniuk, vice-president of Sudbury operations for Xstrata Nickel.

"They are going to approach the federal government about other opportunities for funding CEMI," Bartolucci said. "The committee will not have any politicians on it ... so they can best pres-

ent their case in a proactive, positive way."

Support for CEMI's cause also will be sought "from mining stakeholders across the country — mining companies, the Canadian Mining Association, unions, SAMSSA (Sudbury Area Mining Supply and Service Association), the Ontario Mining Association, the Federation of Northern

Ontario Municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and so on," Bartolucci said.

"So it looks like there's a good strategy in place and the strategy will be free of political interference, which I think is very appropriate."

At the same time, however, the federal government can expect local politicians to continue their demands for federal funding for CEMI.

"My position is that it's worth fighting for and my position will not change, nor will my way of advocacy change," Bartolucci said.

CEMI was created to develop research in deep mining, exploration, mine process engineering, automation and environmental processes. The agency has received \$10 million from the provincial government and

\$5 million each from Vale Inco and Xstrata, as well as indirect support from several other sources.

CEMI had sought \$9.5 million, over a five-year period, from FedNor, the federal government's economic development program for Northern Ontario.

The Conservative government said earlier this week it rejected the CEMI request because it "would require a significant investment that would not serve to maximize FedNor's principles of promoting growth, economic diversification, job creation and sustainable, self-reliant communities in Northern Ontario."

The federal decision was unanimously condemned in the community earlier this week. However, at Thursday's meeting, "there was very little

fed-bashing," Bartolucci said. "But there was a lack of understanding as to why they arrived at that decision."

It is incomprehensible that the federal government does not recognize the value of investing in mining research and innovation, Mayor John Rodriguez said.

"I don't know what their thinking is ... because CEMI is in line with the things they talk about — the need to innovate, to be ahead of the game in terms of research and development, in this case pioneering new and better ways of mining, safer ways of mining, more efficient and productive ways of mining. That's what this centre of excellence is all about."

The federal decision is particularly difficult to accept given the enormous revenues the mining industry is providing to the national treasury, Rodriguez said.

"Here's an industry that is booming and returning great returns to the federal coffers not only in corporate tax, but in income tax from all the elevated incomes that people in the industry are earning. They take the money generated from mining, but they don't really see mining as that important to the economic wellbeing of the country."

dstpierre@thesudburystar.com

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