

For immediate release

Thursday, June 21, 2007

Mining industry, government and academia join forces for sustainable research program

Sudbury (Ontario) – Representatives from the private and public sectors came together Thursday, June 21, 2007, at the Willet Green Miller Centre, to celebrate the collaboration between industry, government and academia in the five-year multi-million dollar research program *Productivity Enhancement and Risk Management in Underground Construction and Mining* (PERM).

Laurentian University and its premier mining and environmental research company, MIRARCO, opened the event with a firm institutional commitment towards the PERM program.

“We are proud to be the leading institutional supporter of PERM,” stated Dr. Liette Vasseur, Laurentian University associate vice-president, research. “This program offers our community many opportunities in mining and the environment, and will help to improve the mining process, minimize worker risks and promote sustainability.”

In addition to the \$8 million Ontario Government Ministry of Research and Innovation contribution announced by the honourable Rick Bartolucci in March this year, numerous industry partners will contribute to the success of the PERM program.

Support pledges announced today included CVRD Inco, investing \$1 million cash and \$1 million in-kind; Rio Tinto (\$625,000 cash and \$1.25 million in-kind); and BESTECH (\$125,000 cash and \$125,000 in kind). Additional pledges include Breakwater Resources Limited (\$375,000 cash and \$375,000 in kind), Nuinsco Resources Limited (\$400,000 cash and \$200,000 in kind), Gartner Lee (\$100,000 cash), Golder Associates (\$50,000 cash and \$125,000 in kind), Avensys (\$40,000), and Symboticware (\$25,000 in kind). Other major industry contributions from companies including Xstrata, Barrick Gold Corporation and BHP Billiton will be finalized in the near future.

Affirming the benefits of PERM for the industry, Mr. Michael Winship, vice-president, Mines, Ontario Operations, CVRD Inco, recognizes that long-term research visions are essential to sustainable operations: “We are at a very fortunate time in the mineral industry, with the current level of exploration and mining activity. CVRD Inco is looking towards sustainability in a lasting time frame, one that requires a dual approach of not only solving the challenges of today, but also anticipating how we can continue to find mining methods and tools that will meet the challenges of tomorrow.”

In addition to a total of \$5.6 million cash and \$5 million in in-kind industry contributions, this project will receive pledges from academic partners and research funding agencies, totaling \$18.4 million cash and close to \$6 million in-kind.

The PERM initiative is managed by MIRARCO with the goal of building capacity and knowledge in the natural resources industry. Principal investigator, Dr. Peter Kaiser, suggests that strong support from all sectors came as a direct result of the ability to demonstrate the relevance of the proposed research to the mining industry and Ontario's economy.

“This project would not have been possible without the combined support of industry, government and academia. We know that the seeds of support planted today will help to attract qualified people to this industry, in streams of post-secondary study, industry placements, and hands-on research jobs. We're excited that PERM seeks to fill the human resource gap with valuable experience while creating new knowledge that will lead to leaps in best practices.”

The project involves three research themes: 1) Design and construction of underground excavations, led by Peter Kaiser; 2) Integrated planning, design and optimization, led by co-principal investigator Dr. Paul Dunn; and 3) Water and waste management, led by co-principal investigator, Dr. Graeme Spiers.

PERM is a collaboration of over 26 academic and industry partners, and anticipates creating more than 150 person years of work. Industry contributions will help support Master's and PhD students, engineers, environmental scientists, geologists, programmers and IT professionals. Research activities are already underway, and approximately 20 full-time and part-time staff and student research positions are now open. Resumes are being accepted at mirarco@mirarco.org.

For more information about PERM, please visit www.mirarco.org or email info@mirarco.org.

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Reference:

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