

# Summary of Public Engagement on Proposed Cochrane Hill Mine

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## Introduction:

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, in an effort to provide the residents and property owners an opportunity to comment on the proposed gold mine for Cochrane Hill, developed a series of public meetings and invited written submissions from the public.

The first two meetings were held on January 17 and 19, 2019 and were by invitation only for property owners within a five kilometer radius of the proposed mine site. The reason for holding special meetings for those property owners was that it was felt they stand to be more directly impacted by the proposed mining operations. Two additional meetings were held on February 12 and 16, 2019 that were open for the community at large. Written comments were accepted until April 1, 2019.

Attendance at the four meetings was approximately 250 of which 81 individuals spoke at the mic and 21 submitted comment cards. We received 49 written comments by email and letters, 1 phone call and 3 comments by a combination of methods.

**Please be advised that the comments are a summary of those received from participants by the Municipality and are not in any way to be interpreted or deemed to be the views or opinions of the Municipality.**

## Summary of Comments:

The following is a summary of comments recorded at the meetings and written comments received by the Municipality. Where possible the comments were grouped by topic.

- i. Jobs
- ii. Environmental
- iii. Habitat
- iv. General

## Jobs:

- Potential local employment opportunities.
- Local jobs keep people and businesses in the community.
- Only a few jobs will be available to local residents. Other mines sites are being phased so staff can be moved from one site to another. Well-paying jobs would require an industry ticket.
- Short term jobs are not worth the destruction to the environment.
- Negative impact on local tourism, potential loss of jobs at local tourism sites.

### **Environmental:**

- Release of heavy metals into the environment (air, soil, water).
- Soil contamination and the impact on local gardens.
- Health concerns for residents from exposure to chemicals and heavy metals released into the water, air and soil.
- Long lasting negative impact on the environment.
- Negative environmental effects on fish and wildlife.
- Negative effects on the local ecosystem and displacement of wildlife.
- Potential for tailings pond breach, earthen walled tailings ponds are prone to failing.
- Leaching from tailings pond is a concern as well as acid rock drainage.
- Tailings pond only monitored for the life of the mine.
- Windblown dust will carry contaminants many kilometers away.
- Air quality concerns: dust from blasting and emissions from trucks and machinery.
- Disruption to the water table and negative effects on wells in the area and the watershed as a whole. Contamination of local ground water.
- Flooding concerns: storms in the area have caused large areas of flooding, how will the mine site and tailings pond withstand large amounts of rain in short amount of time, climate change will bring more rain and flooding.
- Risk of a catastrophic event - references to the Mount Polley BC mine breach.
- Tailings pond is very large and in close proximity to the Nine Mile Woods Road.
- Tailings pond is a threat to the Cameron Lakes and subsequently the St. Mary's River.
- Pollution will be carried down river of the mine as well.
- Depth of the open pit, below sea level.
- Concern regarding light pollution.
- Cyanide will not be used at Cochrane Hill.
- Noise concerns: blasting, mine operations and traffic.
- St. Mary's is one of the last pristine environments in Nova Scotia.
- Previous mining operations in the area left toxins behind (Cochrane Hill & Goldenville)

### **Habitat:**

- Habitat disturbance or loss for threatened and at risk species (Wood turtles, Mainland moose, Atlantic salmon, bats, several bird species, etc ).
- Negative impacts to the St. Mary's River and the work done by the SMRA in restoring salmon habitat.
- Mine threatens local conservation lands along the river.
- The proposed site is too close to important water courses and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Massive water withdrawal requirements from local water sources.

### **General:**

- Trucking from the mine will destroy the roads, there may be trucking when the roads are closed. Tax payers will be paying for the repair. Rough roads deter tourists.
- The proposed mine site cannot be seen from the river.
- Increase in the population of St. Mary's.
- Possible outmigration of long term residents.
- Does not align with St. Mary's ten year strategic plan.
- Potential benefits not worth all the risks.
- Decrease in property values resulting in significant financial loss for land owners. Potential inability to sell property.

- Decrease in property values will reduce the municipality's tax base and little tax revenue will be received from the mine site.
- Will the Municipality receive any portion of the revenue that the province receives from the mine royalties?
- Mistrust of mining company - was based in Australia now merged with Canadian company, will leave a mess behind, will abandon site if the price of gold drops, only be here for a short time.
- The bond the mining company is required to put forth is very low and only for two years after mine site closes.
- After the province returns the bond to the gold company, who will be responsible for any monitoring or accidents that arise at the site?
- Gold mines are one of the top five pollutants/industries in the world.
- The mine footprint is massive; scale of the project does not fit with the character of the area.
- Vibrations from blasting - effects on pets and local wildlife.
- Blasting can create cracks in local foundations and well corks.
- Increased traffic: trucks, heavy equipment, supply trucks, worker vehicles, road safety (could increase vehicle accident rates).
- Risk of major disaster and the burden on local fire departments.
- Destruction of terrain leaving behind a large moonscape.
- Preference for alternate opportunities such and eco-tourism, wind generators, large park/nature reserve, etc.
- Quality of life will be negatively impacted.
- Gold mining companies have a track record of leaving massive environmental issues in their wake. What will be the legacy left for the coming generations if the mine proceeds?
- There is negativity towards new things but we need to accept something. Change is the price of progress
- No social benefits to mining gold (jewelry, currency & industrial)
- Reclamation possibilities - public garden.

The Municipality wishes to thank all who participated in the meetings and submitted comments on the proposed gold mine in Cochrane Hill. We have made a concerted effort to ensure the summary provides a sound overview of the responses we received.

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

April 15, 2019