

Good as gold

For anyone who's a regular reader of this column, you'll know that I'm usually preaching the gospel of black gold. Oil and gas has filled Atlantic Canadian coffers for 30 years and with 90 per cent of N.L.'s offshore jurisdiction yet to be seismic surveyed, I'm confident that the ongoing expansions to this valuable resource will continue to boost our economy for decades to come.

The advantage of being around a long time is that I've seen what this place was like without oil and gas revenue and I know exactly what this lucrative resource means to the region. Trust me when I say this—oil and gas has been good for Atlantic Canada. Long story short: I'm a big fan.

The disadvantage of being around a long time is that familiarity sometimes breeds complacency. For me, that means not giving the mining sector its fair share of applause. I've—*mea culpa*—taken it for granted.

While oil and gas has dominated our resource horizon since the '90s, mining has been active in Atlantic Canada for literally thousands of years. As you'll read in "Past, Present, Future" (see page NR13), Maritime Archaic Indians gathered chert to use as spear points and knives back in 2,000 B.C. and the Dorset people were mining soapstone for a variety of uses over a millennium ago. Large-scale industrial mining, too, has a long-term history here: think of what iron ore has meant to Labrador and Bell Island, or coal to Cape Breton, or nickel to Voisey's Bay. Consider how, for a time, Bathurst was home to the richest underground zinc/lead mine in the world (more on that in this issue's cover story, page NR27).

More impressive yet is the fact that, after literal millennia of development, mining continues to be an active and growing industry in this region. To quote the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's "Exploration and Development Highlights" document, published in January 2019, the province's mining sector "experienced an exceptional year in 2018". There were significant new capital works programs announced by the Iron Ore Co. of Canada and Vale Newfoundland and Labrador Ltd. There were also impressive signs of "positive results" from companies like Alderon Iron Ore, Marathon Gold, Norzinc, Buchans Resources and Search Minerals.

That's just a small sample of the activity in Newfoundland and Labrador. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are seeing a similar resurgence. Indeed, digging deeper into the Bathurst Mining Camp is fuelling speculation that the area might soon a renewal of this long-treasured industry.

What more can I say? Atlantic Canada is truly blessed when it comes to its natural resources.



Hubert F. Hutton
Publisher

natural resources

OIL, GAS, MINING & ALTERNATIVE ENERGY IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Publisher Hubert Hutton | hhutton@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com

Executive Editor Dawn Chafe | dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com

Staff Writer Sarah Smellie | ssmellie@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com

Art Director Carolyn Greene | cgreene@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com

VP National Sales Tonia Sheridan | tsheridan@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com

Direct line: 709.726-9300 ext. 102 | Cell: 709.728.1215

Director of Sales (N.S.) Sharon Resky | sresky@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com | 902.229.0798

Director of Sales (N.B.) Stéphane Picard | spicard@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com | 506.607.2429

Sales Representative Stephen Barnes | sbarnes@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com | 709.765.5112

Executive Assistant Sharon Hurley | sharon@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com

Head Office: 709.726.9300

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