



Feedback from AME BC as Presented to the Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board on May 3, 2011

On behalf of the 4,000 individual and 300 corporate members of the Association for Mineral Exploration BC (AME BC), please see my feedback below as verbally presented to the Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board (M-KAB) following the 2 days of meetings held by the M-KAB in Fort St. John on May 2-3, 2011.

“As in geology, so in social institutions, we may discover the cause of all past changes in the present invariable order of society” (Henry David Thoreau)

Background:

The Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (M-KMA) was intended to establish a world standard for environmental sustainability and economic stability, serving as a model that balances human activities such as resource extraction and tourism with conserving its environmental values and wilderness state over time.

M-KMA was created in 1997 following completion of the Fort St John and Fort Nelson LRMPs, and later expanded in 2001 following completion of the Mackenzie LRMP. The M-KMA comprises 6.4 million hectares of land (almost 7% of BC) in northeastern BC, of which 25% is park and 75% is special resource management zones, where careful resource development is permitted in a manner that ensures natural values are maintained. Multiple land uses include:

- Guide outfitting;
- Traditional hunting and gathering by First Nations;
- Trapping;
- Tenured and non-tenured recreation and tourism;
- Oil and gas development
- Alternative energy developments (eg. wind energy);
- Mining; and,
- Forestry

Legislation:

The designating 1998 legislation creating the M-KMA Act —the *Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act*—sets out the management intent for the area in the preamble as follows:

- *Whereas the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area is an area of unique wilderness in northeastern British Columbia that is endowed with a globally significant abundance and diversity of wildlife;*

- *And Whereas the management intent for the Muskwa -Kechika Management Area is to maintain in perpetuity the wilderness quality, and the diversity and abundance of wildlife and the ecosystems on which it depends while allowing resource development and use in parts of the Muskwa –Kechika Management Area designated for those purposes including recreation, hunting, trapping, timber harvesting, mineral exploration and mining, oil and gas exploration and development;*
- *And Whereas the long-term maintenance of wilderness characteristics, wildlife and its habitat is critical to the social and cultural well-being of first nations and other people in the area;*
- *And Whereas the integration of management activities especially related to the planning, development and management of road accesses within the Muskwa -Kechika Management Area is central to achieving this intent and the long-term objective is to return lands to their natural state as development activities are completed...”*

Mineral Exploration and Mining Potential in the M-KMA:

Although there are currently no mining operations in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area, the diverse geology hosts significant mineral resources and potential economic deposits. Mineral exploration and future mine development will have economic benefits for the local area and all British Columbians. Therefore, the provincial government has confirmed mining as an accepted and encouraged activity in special resource management zones.

In terms of mining resources in the M-KMA, the western North American lead-zinc belt extends throughout the region. Examples of economic potential include: lead, zinc, silver, barite, diamonds, niobium and lanthanum as well as gold, copper and tungsten. To date, Driftpile Creek located in the Kechika area has been identified as having excellent potential with two defined zones containing significant combined lead-zinc sulphides.

The Churchill Copper Mine, which ceased operations prior to the establishment of the M-KMA, is located within the M-KMA Muskwa Ranges in the Foreland Belt, in the Churchill Resource Management Zone. The site has been described as a region known for widespread vein-hosted copper in sedimentary rocks. This project received an award from the BC Technical and Research Committee on Reclamation for excellence in metal mine reclamation in 2005.

Key M-KMA mineral exploration and mining facts:

- Active prospecting and limited mining occurred in the 1950s – 1970s period
- The 2004 mineral tenure map on the M-KMA website covers an estimated 30,000 hectares
- There has been very little mineral exploration activity until 2010, but this is starting to increase
- As of May 2011, there are mineral tenures covering 250,000 hectares in the M-KMA, representing 450 titles in the area
- Minerals of interest include rare earth prospects but also lead-zinc, such as:

- Akie Project (Zn,Pb,Ag) – Canadian Zinc
- Aley Project (Niobium) – Taseko Mining and Exploration

Preliminary Findings:

1. The M-KMA Act specified local strategic plans for some sectors (but not for mineral exploration or mining) to ensure maintenance of wilderness characteristics, wildlife and the habitat on which they depend;
2. Lack of information or misinterpretation of the Act and subsequent planning may have created an “expectation and perception gap” between the mineral exploration and mining industry, First Nations, government permitting agencies, and other interested communities and stakeholders;
3. While there is substantial discussion and reports about ecology, conservation, and climate change, there appears to be a limited “open for business” culture to welcome potential mineral explorers into a mutually respectful dialogue;
4. Strong concerns remain with the mineral exploration industry about not having certainty of permitting requirements, access challenges and security of tenure; and,
5. Generally speaking, mineral exploration activity levels in the M-KMA have been far lower than other comparable areas of BC since M-KMA was created.

Suggested Recommendations:

1. Embrace and plan for change;
2. Encourage a welcoming business culture that respects all values, opinions and interests;
3. Focus on specific economic development opportunities in the M-KMA in order to demonstrate a balanced approach and sustainability;
4. Invite the BC Geological Survey of British Columbia (BCGS) to review the geology and mineral exploration potential of the M-KMA;
5. Partner with the BCGS and Geoscience BC to undertake research in the M-KMA in order to have the best public geoscience available to inform advice and recommendations provided to government;
6. Host a follow-up meeting to the Joint Solutions Workshop for Mining in the M-KMA (held March 29-30, 2006 - Bruce McKnight was workshop chair) in order to:
 - a. Share views from First Nations, government and all stakeholders
 - b. Review best practices in the mineral exploration and mining industry in areas such as:
 - i. Health and safety
 - ii. Environmental management
 - iii. Aboriginal engagement

- iv. Investor relations and Economic development
- c. Review the case-study involving Mel Stewart, Ric Careless, COTA, AME BC, MABC and BC Government wherein mineral exploration and development opportunities were supported in the south Chilcotin and restrictive land use and access policies changed to allow exploration and development.

***“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail”
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)***

Prospecting and mineral exploration is the sustaining lifeblood for mining. As such, AME BC looks forward to working with the M-KAB to create innovative and successful prospecting, mineral exploration and development initiatives that will encourage, grow and sustain the sector and support families and communities throughout the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area and northern British Columbia.

If you have any questions about AME BC or my initial recommendations, please contact me at 778-233-6459 or 604-630-3920 or gdirom@amebc.ca.

Best regards,



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cc: Board of Directors, AME BC

About AME BC:

AME BC is the predominant voice of mineral exploration and development in British Columbia. Established in 1912, AME BC represents thousands of members including geoscientists, prospectors, engineers, entrepreneurs, exploration companies, suppliers, mineral producers, and associations who are engaged in mineral exploration and development in BC and throughout the world. Through leadership, advocacy, and partnerships, AME BC promotes a healthy environment and business climate for the mineral exploration and development industry.