

## Dr. John Gammon MORNING NORTH Interview

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MINING CENTRE

**ALLISON DEMPSTER:** You may have heard about plans for a mining centre at Laurentian University in Sudbury. Actually its official title is the Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation and it just got \$10-million from the Provincial Government. To find out where that money is going and what the project is all about we've reached John Gammon. He's the Director of Mining Initiatives at Laurentian University. Good morning Dr. Gammon.

**DR. JOHN GAMMON /** Director of Mining Initiatives at Laurentian University: Good morning Allison.

**DEMPSTER:** So what's the idea behind this Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation?

**DR. GAMMON:** Well the idea came out of something Minister Bartolucci put together in 2003 called the Ontario Mineral Industry Cluster Council; they're a multi stakeholder group that look at the issues are facing mining in Ontario. One of the things they looked at where the research needs of the industry. What do we need to be better at? What do we need to be smarter at? They identified five areas. We need to be venturing and exploring and finding the mines for tomorrow. We need to be better at planning how we mine our ore bodies. We need to be better at learning how to mine deep hole bodies. We noted we need to find out how we should use telerobotics. And finally we need to reduce the emissions to the environment and do a better job of cleaning up after mining operation. So they put a business plan together addressing those five research priorities, which is made available on the OMICC.ca website, if anybody wants to have a look at it, and called for the creation of this Centre for Excellence in Mining Innovation to be created in Sudbury. And in December, Laurentian announced that they were taking up this idea from OMICC that they were working on it, that they'd tied (sic) in some others and were putting together a business plan focusing on making this a reality.

**DEMPSTER:** So why Sudbury?

**DR. GAMMON:** Well Sudbury is the obvious place for it to be. The whole world knows that Canada is - what Canada is good at around the world and well known for is hockey and mining. You know we're really, really good at mining and when you look at Canada, Ontario is by far the most important mineral producer in the Country, and within Ontario Sudbury is the recognized the acknowledge centre for mining. We're the most prolific mining camp in Canada. We produced \$150 billion worth in today's dollars of wealth out of the ground. We're investing \$200 or \$300 million in the future of Sudbury. It's the only acting mining camp that's got a University and a College smack dab in the middle of the camp that recognize mining as being important to them. The only Province with a geological survey headquarters in the middle of a mining camp. So Sudbury is the obvious place, and we believe Laurentian is the obvious place too, because of Laurentian's existing commitments to mining. We have six or seven research centres and a lot of faculty who are already working on these kinds of issues.

**DEMPSTER:** So when people hear about a Centre for Excellence they might be thinking that a new building is going up on campus, but I guess we're talking about something this tangible here, what exactly is that money going towards?

**DR. GAMMON:** Well this initial money is certainly not for a building. That might come at some future date. This will be run by a very small administrative group of a director and two or three

staff, and what we've done recently then, working together with the industry is to put together a five year operating plan, which has identified for specific projects, concrete projects and the budgets associated with them, and the total amount is a \$30 million spend over five years, and we're hoping that the industry will put out \$10 million of that. With the Provincial announcement of \$10 million really gets us started and we hope the Feds come to the table with a similar amount.

**DEMPSTER:** So what are some examples of these projects you'll be putting the money towards?

**DR. GAMMON:** Okay, well as I say we have eight of them, and just to briefly mention the highlights we want to be teaching exploration in a better way to undergraduates and master students. We've had the idea for a finishing school for mining engineers. I could come back and explain a bit about that. We want to focus on using geophysics to define deep ore bodies much better. We very importantly need to learn how to mine at great depth. There are two projects looking at planning and risk management, doing that much better in a mining operation. We're looking at telerobotics, and finally we're looking at doing a much better job around emissions to the environment and cleaning up the mine site at the end of the day.

**DEMPSTER:** I'll just take you up on that offer to talk more about the finishing school, what's that about?

**DR. GAMMON:** There's a real, really shortage of skills people in the mining profession. The industry has identified an 80,000 person gap between the people who we know are in school at the moment and the people that we know are retiring, so we really need to speed that up, and it's come to our attention that there are a lot of immigrants to Canada that have qualifications through their home countries but aren't able to practice here. So what we're planning on doing is putting this course in place that will help to upgrade their skills to bring them to Canadian standards and do the other requirements to become professional engineers and qualified to work and use their skills here in Canada.

**DEMPSTER:** What hurdles are you facing getting people interested in this project? Mining isn't necessarily a sexy area of research, how do you overcome sort of the reputation it has?

**DR. GAMMON:** Well mining has a really bad outdated reputation. The media I'm afraid is a large part to play for this. We were usually showed as the bad guys in movies and documentaries and that sort of thing, whereas there's a tremendous amount to be really proud of with our mining industry. It's a high tech industry. We have more post-secondary graduates say then in any other industry; it's highly paid; lots of people here, miners earning more than a \$100,000 a year; it's safe. The statistics show for example that it's more dangerous to be a civil servant then it is to be a miner. It's progressive. We're working with communities; we hire more aboriginals as part of our workforce then any other industrial sector. It's a temporary use of land. We're getting really, really good at cleaning up after the miners finish. If you go and visit Elliot Lake for example, you'll find it really hard to be believe how many mines once used to be there; the sites are being cleaned up, and the footprint is just very small in a temporary land use. So we need to get that message out there that there's this tremendous shortage of skilled people. So for young people this is a tremendous opportunity to come into a field where it's really needed. We all need the commodities; we all need knives and forks, cars, we fly in planes; all of that stuff comes out of mines, and there are just not the people there to find them and operate them. So salaries are going to be really good. It's going to mean traveling the world and exciting adventurous life, and I can't emphasize hard enough to young people what an exciting future mining can give them.

**DEMPSTER:** When do you hope to get this Centre for Excellence off the ground?

**DR. GAMMON:** Now that we've got it committed for the Provincial Government, we're going to start within fairly fast. We hope that the secretary, the director will be in place by this fall. We're actually going to start some of the projects that I mentioned to you getting underway in a very short time. One of the priorities is deep mining, and we want to certainly get on with that.

**DEMPSTER:** Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

**DR. GAMMON:** Yeah. In Timmins the Kidd Creek Mine just goes on down to depth and in Kirkland Lake the Macassa Mine continues down to depth, and here in Sudbury the ore bodies, the mineralization continues down to places like Onaping and Creighton. What stops us is our ability to mine those great depths both economically and safety. They cost the hydro, the issues around ventilation, the rock stability, hoisting; all of these are tremendous challenges and we need to know how to do that economically and safely. I think if we can solve those issues through research, so establishing a chair in deep mining and getting the post doctoral fellows and the graduate students and the undergraduates, we think the local economy will really benefit because those mines will continue to contribute to the communities and we'll find new ones at those depths. But the other big spin off from all of this is for the North East generally. If for example the vision is, if you're a mining company and you've discovered an ore body in say Kazakhstan and it's going to be very deep, what we want to happen is the people to immediately think, "ha, I've got to go to Sudbury" because in Sudbury and in Northeastern Ontario that's where the how to expertise reside. How am I going to develop this mine and what plans am I going to have to put into place. The consultants that can tell me all of that they're right there in Northeastern Ontario. I'm going to need some services; I'm going to need some geophysics to define this ore body better; I'm going to need all kinds of services and the people that provide those again are right there in Northeastern Ontario; and finally I'm going to need hoisting equipment and ropes and robotic mining equipment, and guess what the manufacturers of all those equipment are mainly concentrated in the North East Ontario region. So if we do this right what will happen here is that we will create a whole area of industry and expertise that will be an export market for this region, and even if the mines here were to eventually close, our vision would be that this work would continue and contribute to the economy here in the North East.

**DEMPSTER:** John Gammon thanks very much for joining me this morning.

**DR. GAMMON:** Thank you Allison.

**DEMPSTER:** John Gammon is the Director of Mining Initiatives at Laurentian University.