

April 2013

Mining report: PDAC's appeal to B.C.-based mining firms

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March saw the annual migration of B.C.-based mining companies to Toronto for the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) conference and trade show, the world's leading mining convention.

The event, now in its 81st year, attracts people involved in mineral exploration from more than 120 countries. Every year the event has grown: 22,000 people attended in 2010; 28,000 people attended in 2011 and more than 30,000 in 2012 and 2013.

As one of this year's attendees, I asked delegates what brought them to the convention, as well as what the highlights of this year's event were for them. W. John DeCooman, vice-president, business development and strategy, at Silver Standard Resources Inc., summed up the main appeal for delegates.

"PDAC has transformed over the past 20 years into a pilgrimage for mining disciples. The mining industry is fortunate to have a comprehensive and inclusive event due to dedicated sponsors, professionals and volunteers. PDAC is a non-stop, multi-dimensional event that draws interest from every continent and every discipline."

A primary benefit of attending cited by delegates was networking. The event is a convention, investors' exchange and trade show all under one roof, which brings together a huge collection of people working or interested in the industry, such as mining executives, geologists, investors, analysts, government officials, international delegations, equipment providers, professionals and other service providers, as well as students.

The 2013 investors' exchange included more than 580 exhibitors while the trade show featured more than 410 companies and organizations.

There are countless cocktail parties, lunches, dinners and other social events taking place during the week, making PDAC a fantastic forum to meet with people, exchange ideas and information and discuss business issues and opportunities.

PDAC is also an ideal opportunity for industry players to connect with government officials as well as First Nation and Inuit groups, particularly those with projects located in the North where such face-to-face meetings may not occur as often as one would like due to geographic limitations.



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Another major benefit of attending PDAC is the marketing opportunities. Companies have the opportunity to tell their story about themselves and their projects, whether at one of the formal company presentation sessions, by speaking with visitors to their booth exhibit or through networking.

This exposure may attract the attention of potential investors or possible business partners.

Rick Mark, CEO and chair of VMS Ventures, a mining exploration company based in North Vancouver, was also at the 2013 PDAC with four full-time geologists who work in his group of companies. For him, "connecting" is the key factor that brings him back to PDAC year after year.

"I've attended PDAC for years now, and every time the event has offered us excellent networking and marketing opportunities. After all, there are 20,000 mining industry people from around the world attending.

For us, another priority is meeting our Toronto investors, so each year we host a small wine and cheese event at the conference as a way of making ourselves available to existing and potential shareholders."

Delegations from the provinces and territories as well as international delegations have the opportunity to showcase the mining activities that are being carried on in their jurisdictions and to let the industry know what is being done at home to encourage resource exploration.

For those looking to learn, a wide selection of presentations, technical courses and workshops are hosted that are relevant to the industry, including an aboriginal program and corporate social responsibility program.

PDAC is also known for attracting students, and its focus on education and training is part of this appeal. The conference has a student program, which includes guided tours and a networking luncheon, to help this group get acquainted with the mining industry.

A final point is that PDAC attracts a lot of media attention. It's the place to be seen if you're part of the global mining community, and often TV crews can be found scouting the exhibition rooms. The national newspapers are also filled with stories and quotes emanating from the convention. If you aren't there, your colleagues and industry contacts may ask why.

PDAC is one of the key milestones in the calendar for the mining industry. It's a great place to network, market yourself and learn. Next year's PDAC convention takes place March 2-5 in Toronto. Be sure to highlight it for 2014

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