Manitoba Orphaned/Abandoned Mine Site Rehabilitation Program

Background:

Manitoba began acting on orphaned and abandoned (O/A) mine site remediation in 1999 by introducing mine closure regulations. The regulations required that environmental liabilities incurred during mining operations be financially secured to cover future remediation costs. Mine closure plans and financial security must now be filed and approved prior to a permit being granted for a new mine operation.

In 2000, Manitoba established the Orphaned/Abandoned Mine Site Rehabilitation Program to address the public safety and environmental health concerns associated with orphaned/abandoned mine sites.

The program was initiated by the Manitoba Mines Branch in 2001-2002 to identify location, ownership, previous inspections, availability of historical documents, and site conditions for the mine sites, which were scattered throughout the Province. A priority-based rehabilitation program was needed, and a hazard-based framework model was developed, implemented and completed from 2005 to 2007, to rank the Manitoba sites and prioritize work in a consistent way.

Under the program, 149 former mine sites were identified as orphaned or abandoned, for which ownership had reverted back to the Crown, as former mining companies no longer existed or did not have the financial capacity to carry out rehabilitation work. Long-term rehabilitation plans were completed for all 149 sites, which were inspected for safety and environmental hazards and prioritized for rehabilitation. Out of the 149 sites, there were five high-priority sites (Lynn Lake, Sherridon, Gods Lake, Snow Lake and Baker Patton), 31 high-hazard sites and the remaining were low to moderate-risk sites.

In 2006, Manitoba established an Environmental Liability Account with a dedicated budget earmarked for the rehabilitation of orphaned/abandoned mine sites.

An aggressive schedule was developed to remediate the high-priority and high-hazard sites by the end of 2012 and various consultants were retained to undertake the work within this schedule. Tender packages were developed for the rehabilitation work and the Province entered into contracts to begin rehabilitation.
Status:

As of December 31, 2014 Manitoba has spent over $200 million on orphan and abandoned mine site rehabilitation through the Orphaned/Abandoned Mine Site Rehabilitation Program, administered by Manitoba Mineral Resources.

Under the O/A Mine Site Rehabilitation Program, total expenditures for 2013/14 were $45.8 million. The rehabilitation work focused on large projects in Ruttan, Sherridon, Lynn Lake and Gods Lake. Total expenditures for 2014/15 are $18.5 million. To date, 30 of 31 high hazard sites have been rehabilitated with the one remaining site to be completed in 2015/16. Remediation activities on 10 low/moderate sites in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have been completed in 2014/15.

Planned expenditures for 2015/16 rehabilitation activities are estimated at $37 million, with work continuing at Ruttan, Sherridon and Gods Lake. A contract has been awarded to provide design engineering, contract management and site supervision of construction activities for rehabilitation of the Fox Mine site near Lynn Lake.

First Nations communities have been participants in the majority of mine rehabilitation projects and in many cases have been awarded sole source contracts or formed joint-ventures with established construction companies. All tenders have a set-aside amount for First Nations or local communities, ranging from 10% to 25%, depending on location.

Manitoba supports the rehabilitation of O/A mines through its programs, partnerships, community involvement and funding initiatives. In addition, the province also participates in the National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative (NOAMI), a co-operative partnership of the Canadian mining industry, federal/provincial/territorial governments, environmental non-government organizations and First Nations.

Further information on mine site rehabilitation activities can be found at:
http://www.manitoba.ca/iem/mines/oa_rehab_history.html

For further information on NOAMI please visit our website:
www.abandoned-mines.org