

Pancon pulls out of McBride mining project

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By Nate Smelle

In response to overwhelming opposition from the community to the controversial McBride mining project in Limerick Township, Pancontinental Resources (Pancon) has decided to walk away from the proposed development. The news broke on Monday, March 25 in a press release on Pancon's website pertaining to the company's acquisition of the St. Laurent Project located in Northern Ontario, 160 kilometres northeast of Timmins. Referring to Pancon's decision to refocus their attention on the St. Laurent Project, the brief statement read "Concurrent with this acquisition, the company has made the decision to terminate its Option Agreement on the McBride Project in southeastern Ontario."

In light of Limerick Township council's vocal opposition, and the lack of support for a mining operation in the area throughout the community. Limerick Area Conservation Coalition co-founder Monica Nikopoulos said she is pleased to see that Pancon listened to the community.

"It has been amazing to see everyone come together to fight this," she said.

"It really has been a community effort. There have been so many different people and organizations putting their hearts and souls into stopping the mine, and even though a lot of people have been coming at it from different angles, everyone has worked really well together."

Nikopoulos expressed her gratitude to all who stepped up and worked to defend the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the land and water that makes the Limerick area a premier destination for cottagers and tourists. She said the fight would still be going on if it weren't for Chief James Marsden and the Alderville First Nation, Mining Watch Canada, everyone from the lake associations and the hundreds of permanent and seasonal residents from Limerick and the surrounding communities that united to protect the local environment and economy.

Looking forward, Nikopoulos said although Pancon's decision to pull out of the McBride project has given the community reason to celebrate, the fight to keep mining operations out of the area is not over.

"While Pancon's termination of the McBride Project is wonderful short-term news, we still face the ongoing challenge of Hastings Highlands Resources potentially searching for another investor to continue explorations now and in the future," said Nikopoulos.

"It's imperative that we send a loud and clear message to Ministry of Northern Development and Mines that any application for another exploration plan or permit for this location, which is due May 6, 2019 should be denied for numerous environmental and societal reasons. It's also imperative that we send a clear message to MNDM that these types of explorations leading to a potentially toxic mine are not welcome in rural populated areas in southern Ontario. Their mandates allowing explorations in these cottage-type areas is outdated, and should no longer be rubber stamped as the McBride Project appears to have been."

Because the legislation which allowed Pancon to consider bringing a mining operation into the heart of cottage country still exists, Nikopoulos said it is important to recognize that there are other exploration companies and geologists searching for potential mining projects in southern Ontario right now. For this reason, she said LACC is asking everyone to write to the MNDM and voice their opposition to any upcoming exploration plans or permits for the McBride Project.

Nikopoulos said it is also necessary to encourage the MNDM to update its mandates for southern Ontario so that communities and exploration companies do not waste their time and resources in the future as she says they have in Limerick over the past eight months.