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Bridging the communications gap

Each year, the Ontario Mining Association (OMA) initiates projects designed to bridge the communication gaps between the Ontario government, the mining industry and the general public. Last year was no exception, as the mining association middlemen set many significant projects into motion.

By Trisha Richards

To educate and inform stakeholders of the importance that the Ontario mining industry places on environmental protection, the OMA presented its latest environmental progress report, *Towards Greener Footprints*, in 2004. The report is also intended to communicate some of the environmental achievements and best practices that have been realized and developed over the years by the mining sector.

The document includes the mining industry's compliance rate for effluent monitoring and effluent limit regulations in 2002--99.6% for daily concentration parameter samples.

Of the OMA's many endeavours last year, one in particular helped to bring the mining industry, the Ontario government and all related parties in direct contact. With the assistance of MNDM Minister Rick Bartolucci, the OMA held an informal get-together in March, called 'Meet the Miners', intended to provide the members of the Ontario Legislature and people from various ministries and other organizations involved in mining with an opportunity to meet their industry associates.

"We want wealth creation and growth in our industry for the future... and I believe you, my friends, are the future," Bartolucci told the crowd.

The reception attracted a large crowd of politicians, public servants and miners to celebrate the industry's contributions to the province. OMA chair Jim Vincent acknowledged the support of Minister Bartolucci, who helped open the doors of Queen's Park for this event. Vincent expressed gratitude for the ministry's support of the 2004 edition of *The Economic and Fiscal Contribution of the Mining Industry in Ontario*. Additionally, he demonstrated that mining is one of the safest sectors in the province--its lost time injury rate improved by 21% to 1.1 per 200,000 hours worked in 2003 compared with 2002, and its total medical aid incidents improved by 7% to 8.4 over the same period.

Opposition critics also had time at the podium. Michael Prue (NDP--Beaches-East York) spoke on behalf of NDP Northern Development & Mines critic Gilles Bisson, and Norm Miller (Progressive Conservative -- Parry Sound-Muskoka and Northern Development & Mines critic) also addressed the audience.

Miller demonstrated his support for the industry and nicely summed up the event's theme: "I recognize how important mining is to the whole province," he said to the gathering, "and I want Ontario to have the status as the best place to mine in the world."

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