

Adex Mining reports success with its indium extraction process

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The Toronto mining company planning to develop a property in southern New Brunswick is one step closer to being able to do so.

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Photo: Submitted

Errol Farr

"This is one of many steps, but it's a key result for us in proving our ability to produce the metals we want to produce," Adex Mining Inc. president Errol Farr said Thursday of the company's results from pilot run tests that prove they can not only extract zinc, tin and indium from the north section of its Mount Pleasant property, but they can also turn raw materials into nearly pure metals. The site is located in Charlotte County halfway between Fredericton and St. George.

"These are results that are very significant to the viability of our project and really demonstrate our ability to make the process we've been working on, which is technically unique, work," Farr said.

The company's been working on getting this part of the operation into production for several years. It has one of the world's largest proven deposits of indium, which is used in making computer and flat-panel displays for all kinds of devices including televisions, iPads, iPods and Blackberries.

It also has one of North America's largest deposits of tin and while one thinks first of tin roofs and tin cans, tin is also used significantly in the electronics business as a solder.

"Both tin and indium have seen their demand increase significantly in the last decade, relative to the supply," Farr said, adding that, while the demand for flat-panel TVs may be levelling off in North America, it's strong elsewhere in the world.

But the process to extract tin, indium and zinc from the resources that are underground is complex. Basically, the company must extract it and concentrate the zinc and indium (which exist together) and then concentrate the tin into two different concentrates. The process the company reported on Thursday takes that concentrate and puts it through a hydro-metallurgical process by dissolving the concentrate into the solution and then purifying the solution. In the end, you get a liquid form of indium that, with the addition of some zinc, grows indium crystals. Thursday's results showed those crystals are 96.25 per cent pure.

"Those results are well within the targets of what we've been planning to achieve, and this pilot run is the first run of a number of them, but it's the run that proves our ability to make that product," Farr said.

"I believe we'd be the only primary miner in the world making product like that. Most mining companies sell their zinc to a smelter who then upgrades it. We're doing it ourselves."

The next step is to prove definitive feasibility - a study that would be used to justify putting the mine back into production. Meanwhile, last week, Adex launched a similar pilot program on tin.

Farr said he expects the mine will be up and running in 18 months, producing all three metals. "To go from a non-producing junior mining company to a producing mining company would be a significant increase in the fortunes of the company and its shareholders," Farr said.

An October deal with a Hong Kong company called Great Harvest raised \$4.8 million for 40 million shares (at \$0.12 per share) and that will cover getting this part of the operation up and running. The deal also provided Great Harvest the right to buy more shares at 0.18 per unit.

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