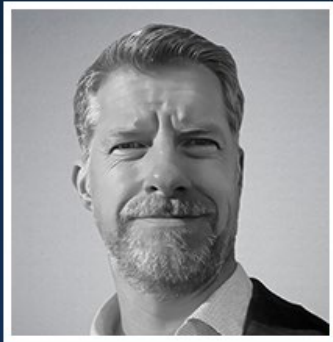


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ONTARIO MINING AND TORONTO'S GLOBAL REACH

James Siddorn,

President (Canada) and Executive Chair (North America), **SRK Consulting**

“Across mining as a whole, digitalization has become important, from underground operational control rooms to data handling and the onset of machine learning and AI.”

Can you update us on recent projects SRK Consulting has undertaken, particularly in Ontario?

We are assisting with resource, reserves and engineering support with our expertise from our Toronto and Sudbury offices. We are working on several gold projects and operating mines in northern Ontario, including a range of services, in particular on tailings management.

In 2024, we are celebrating our 50th anniversary with events to mark the occasion throughout the year.

What changes have you seen in the mining industry recently?

There has been a strong demand in tailings management following the tailings failures globally. The demand for tailings engineering was high before but has increased significantly, with companies ensuring they are actively managing and monitoring their tailings facilities.

Across mining as a whole, digitalization has become important, from underground operational control rooms to data handling and the onset of machine learning and AI. Combined with this, companies are trying to improve their internal practices and make positive changes, which is not easy due to the long history of certain established customs within operating mines.

How are you seeing AI impact exploration?

I think we are taking baby steps as an industry at the moment and many people still do not truly understand how machine learning should be applied to their work. Companies have realized it is difficult to deal with the amount of data they collect and are using AI to help them visualize and understand this, but outcomes can be influenced by the algorithms and weights used in the process. In geology, the process is advancing, and companies are gaining traction, but engineering has not quite caught up. Whilst it may be a hot topic, the implementation of AI in the mining sector remains in the early stages.

How does SRK reconcile its consulting interests with its software development activities?

Philosophically, SRK is a professional services consultancy not a software company, as we believe this creates a conflict of interest. Having said this, we have produced a lot of software over the years, including Leapfrog Geo. We now offer ventilation products focused on underground modelling and management, and we just launched HiveMap, a new digital mapping software solution. Our philosophy is based around creating solutions for the industry and partnering with the right people to deliver them.

Could you give an assessment of the strength of the Ontario mining sector?

From an operational standpoint, Ontario is very well placed. The gold price versus the production cost has left producers in very good shape. The only real challenge is their equity is not matching the value they are producing. This has slightly improved for certain companies in the past year but demonstrating shareholder value remains difficult. Combine this with the stable nickel market that is helping development in areas like Sudbury and expansion for certain operations gives Ontario a competitive advantage for years to come.

What is more of a concern in the province is the state of the junior market, who have yet to see sufficient investment from institutions. We hear it is very difficult to raise funds here in Ontario, with other hubs such as Australia becoming major competitors, in part due to the strength of the lithium market there. Anything we can do as an industry to improve the junior market and the liquidity of funds available is important. With the right team, quality projects, and a proven track record, this becomes less of an issue, but the TSX and the entire Toronto market do have challenges in this area.

How important is collaboration in the mining industry?

At SRK, we conduct projects that require multi-office solutions, whether that be due to geographical or disciplinary variation. The world's green transition presents a unique opportunity for the mining sector to come together and promote the industry. However, I think we are missing an opportunity due to a lack of collaboration. When you look at other industries facing similar challenges there is a spirit of community and collaboration, something which the mining industry could engage in more often. Certain companies have institutional rivalries where they are unwilling to share information, and this impacts the sector's relationship with the public as well as its overall progress. If we could develop some way to bring more large mining companies together to promote mining to the wider public, it would be beneficial at all levels.