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### What has driven SRK's business in the USA in the last few months?

Our North American operations have been remarkably active, particularly in the US. We have been extensively involved in several new projects and supporting existing operations. Some of the latest projects have included lithium, copper and gold. We have worked on resource and reserve estimates, mine planning, and comprehensive mine waste engineering and permitting exercises.

With the Biden administration's heightened focus on critical minerals, there has been a surge in activity and funding dedicated for critical minerals projects, including reprocessing old mine waste to extract minerals that were once considered of little to no value.

Additionally, despite recent lithium price fluctuations, long-term perspectives drive sustained interest.

### What is the importance of mine closure plans?

Mine closure is not merely an end-of-life consideration; it demands early attention during the mine life cycle, especially during the development phase. Forethought in the design of mine and waste facilities can help avoid complications and higher costs during closure.

On the other hand, proactive engagement with communities and stakeholders has gained increasing importance. Asking for their input early in the process ensures their in-

volvement in discussions about the future use of the mine property, considering potential repurposing of land and infrastructure for other uses. The overarching goal is to facilitate a transition from a mining-based economy to a post-mining one, emphasizing socio-economic transitioning.

### How do you approach integrating new technologies into existing mine closure plans?

Current technologies to extract additional metals from mine waste is a good example. By extracting critical metals from mine waste, we can mitigate the potential environmental impacts from a closed site. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the constant evolution of mine closure technologies. Even with a meticulously planned closure for a 20-year mine life, the development of new technologies is inevitable. Continuous review and modification of closure plans are essential as new data emerges, regulations evolve, community perspectives shift, and innovative technologies are developed.

### How do mine closures affect local communities from a socio-economic perspective?

Closure of mines will affect local communities, regardless of where they occur. However, in the US the impacts can be less than in many countries where community resilience is limited, government and community capacity is less, and workforce mobility more difficult. Socioeconomic transition-

ing is complex and despite efforts to mitigate the impacts of mine closure on communities and local economies, some level of impact will remain.

Mining jobs generally offer higher than average salaries. While some jobs may be replaced post-closure in other industries, rarely are all positions filled, and the new opportunities often come with lower salaries. This presents a significant challenge, especially considering the potential out-migration of skilled workers seeking employment in other mining regions. This dynamic not only alters the economic landscape but also impacts the character of local communities.

Finding alternative future uses for mine sites and infrastructure is one method for developing alternative economies and mitigating some of the impact of mine closure. For example, most mine sites in the US rely on the grid for power, utilizing high-capacity transmission lines. When a green energy component is part of the closure vision, there is potential to repurpose these transmission lines.

### Where do you see gaps that should be bridged in mine closures?

I have been heavily focused on socio-economic transitioning in recent years. Historically, there has been a tendency to create silos between those working on community engagement and the technical aspects of closure. My focus is to bridge this gap and integrate the technological and social dimensions of mine closure. This integrated approach is personally exciting and fulfilling especially because it fosters a more holistic and practical path to success for closure initiatives.

### What should we expect from SRK in the upcoming months?

At SRK, we strive to maintain leadership across various sectors within our scope of services. Considering the ongoing labor shortage in the mining industry, we are constantly seeking bright individuals. We actively seek talented people with innovative ideas, recognizing the industry's need for fresh perspectives. Internally, we are exploring the potential use of artificial intelligence in our work, though cautiously, ensuring it aligns with our commitment to excellence. ■