

Gold mine closer to reality

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Mine manager Doug Keating stands at the entrance to the Dufferin mine, which Quebec-based junior exploration company Ressources Appalaches is seeking to reopen. (AARON BESWICK/Truro Bureau)

PORT DUFFERIN — An Eastern Shore gold mine is now one permit away from reopening.

On Thursday, **Ressources Appalaches Inc.** got the nod from the provincial Labour Department, which had reviewed the mine's equipment and procedures for their effect on worker safety.

The last shoe to drop before the Quebec-based junior exploration company can operate the mine will be to receive industrial approval from the Environment Department. For the company, opening its first mine would also mean no longer having “junior” slapped onto references to the exploration company.

“We've been told that we're nearing completion of that process,” said Jean-Claude Morel, executive vice-president of Ressources Appalaches on Thursday.

The company filed for industrial approval in May.

That approval is also required before New York financing firm **Lascaux Resource Capital Partners, LLC**, will make available the final \$7.5 million of a \$10-million loan to get the mine started.

Work continued on Thursday to get the mine ready after a 12-year shutdown.

The mine ran for eight months in 2001 under a different operator but shut down when the price of gold dropped to around \$300 an ounce.

On Thursday, it looked as if the big machines — inherited from the previous owners — that grind up and separate the gold from the mine rock had all been given a fresh coat of paint.

Gold is currently trading at over \$1,300 an ounce and Morel said that while expenses have gone up since 2001, Ressources Appalaches will be profitable at current prices.

If it opens, the Dufferin mine will be the first new underground mine to operate in Nova Scotia in decades.

So far, 835 applications have been received from people vying for 52 positions. Those won't be filled until the company receives industrial approval. Currently, there are about 20 people working to get the mine up and operational.

The existing mine tunnels travel about 400 metres, chasing a quartz vein laced with gold to a depth of about 1,250 metres.

“We've got a lot farther to go than that,” Doug Keating, mine manager, said on Thursday.

Upon receiving industrial approval, Keating said it would take four months before mining could start. Then he estimated it would take another four months to ramp up production to the blasting and milling of 300 tonnes of aggregate per day.