

Colombia welcomes the mining world

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The importance of the PDAC convention to the mining world can be seen in the diversity of nations represented by delegates and official representations by national governments.

Colombia is one of several countries making its pitch to the world at this year's convention. The country's delegation is hosting a day-long session that opened with a networking continental breakfast followed by welcoming speeches and then an afternoon to meet one-on-one with representatives from the Colombian government.

The importance that the Colombians place on the convention is evident by the calibre of its representatives. At the morning session, the Colombian Trade, Tourism and Investment Commissioner in Canada, the Colombian Ambassador to Canada, the Director General of Ingeominas, and the Colombian Minister of Mines and Energy were all present and gave introductory remarks to a standing-room only crowd.

The gist of their message is that Colombia has taken steps to encourage mining companies to come to their country to responsibly explore, develop and extract its mineral riches. Mario Ballesteros, Director General of Ingeominas, part of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, reviewed the role his organization plays in supporting the mining industry. Its role appears to be similar to the Geological Survey of Canada by providing geological maps, carrying out geochemistry surveys throughout the country and making the data available to the public including some data online.

He went on to explain how to obtain mining concessions in the country and pointed out that, due to recent changes, title applications can be obtained in an average of 30 days and the process done online. The government is making efforts to make Colombia a mining friendly place to explorers and responsible miners.

The keynote speaker in the morning was Colombia's Minister of Mines and Energy, Hernan Martinez Torres. He stated that Canada is the leading mining investor in the country and that direct mining investment has been increasing over the decade. This increase is due to the growing demand for commodities and heightened security in the country. While extolling the virtues of working in Colombia, he qualified this by saying mining companies in Colombia will have to work responsibly to protect the environment, abide by health and safety regulations, and respect human rights.

In an open invitation to potential miners, he stated that Colombia is an underexplored country with prospective geology for hosting base and precious metals, gemstones and coal, and it has a regulatory legal system that, among other things, guarantees right to titles.