Focus on the Future

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Focus on the Project

Sydney commands to take centre stage in the field of environmental remediation as implementers of the Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Remediation Project (the Project) remain focused on a successful conclusion to their work.
The Project is governed by a $400 million cost-share agreement signed by both the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia.

Currently, contractors are on site working to safely solidify and stabilize contaminated sediments in the Tar Ponds, a keystone element of the overall project. The work will reshape the site and allow for reuse of the property. Contractors have also built a groundwater collection and treatment system to remediate the Coke Ovens site. Other projects include reclaiming an urban brook, operating a material processing facility, and capping the Tar Ponds and covering the Coke Ovens for future use.
Focus on the Technology

Solidification & Stabilization (S/S) with cement is a commonly used remediation method for the safe treatment, management and reuse of contaminated waste. Developed in the 1950s, S/S technology is widely used today to successfully treat industrial hazardous waste and contaminated material.
Solidification & Stabilization involves mixing cement into contaminated material and works to protect the environment and our health by immobilizing hazardous contaminants within the treated material. The cement stabilizes hazardous constituents to prevent their escape into the environment. Soils and sediments impacted with a variety of organic and inorganic contaminants have been treated successfully using this versatile technology.

Remediation of the Sydney Tar Ponds involves treating the contaminants in place with cement being directly added to contaminated materials. The flow from brooks and groundwater is redirected during the work to control water in construction areas. Once the treated material has passed performance criteria, an engineered cap is built to provide the treated material with extra protection.

Groundwater collection and treatment on the Coke Ovens site consists of underground pipes to collect water flowing under and through the site, and to direct the flow to an on-site water treatment plant. The plant treats the water to meet freshwater guidelines, and then empties the treated water into a nearby brook.
Focus on Environment

To ensure the protection of the environment, an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) was developed to manage and minimize potential environmental impacts related to the Project, and to communicate those efforts to all stakeholders and the public. The overall objective is to provide a comprehensive strategy that ensures compliance with relevant environmental legislation, policies and permitting requirements, and to ensure that the environment is protected throughout the life of the Project.
The EMP is based on three fundamentals:

- **Compliance with legislative requirements and environmental regulations**
- **Adherence to the Sydney Tar Ponds guidelines, practices and procedures**
- **Conformity with the best management practices and industry standards**

There is an extensive program to monitor the air in Sydney. This program consists of two parts:

- **Air that is monitored at the Project fence line in real time**
- **A series of ambient air monitors that are located throughout the community measuring 24 hours every six days**

The Air Monitoring Program provides contractors with the information they need to work safely. The **Real Time** program provides nearly continuous air quality measurements to a team of air experts who gather air data every 15 minutes while work is underway. Technicians place state-of-the-art air monitoring equipment both upwind and downwind of construction activities. Contractors are alerted when emissions are reaching a level that requires attention. If contractors reach a specific level, mitigative measures are implemented. If their efforts are ineffective, they must stop work for the day. The Agency alerts the community each time there is a work stoppage due to an exceedance. The **Ambient Air Monitoring Program** data is used primarily to provide the Project with historical data and to identify trends in our atmosphere.

The Project has a Master Health and Safety Plan that provides guidelines, requirements and procedures to protect the health and safety of the public, as well as any person associated with the cleanup who enters Project property.
Focus on the Team

The Sydney Tar Ponds Agency is responsible for implementing the largest remediation project in Canada - the Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Cleanup. The Agency is a single-purpose entity created by the Province of Nova Scotia. It is responsible for the day-to-day operations and oversight of many technical aspects of the Project.
The Agency is comprised of professional contract managers and project implementers with engineering and environmental backgrounds. They are backed by highly trained financial and administrative personnel, as well as professional communications and safety experts.

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) is the federal lead for the Project. On behalf of the Government of Canada, it monitors the Project along with its partner, the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. PWGSC ensures that the Project is being delivered in a way that is environmentally sound and protective of the community’s health and that budget and schedule commitments are being met.

PWGSC also ensures that the Project is managed in an effective and accountable manner that is protective of the taxpayers’ interests. It ensures the recommendations of the Joint Environmental Review Panel are adhered to, as detailed in the government partners’ joint response. The common objective of the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia is to ensure that the Project is completed on time and on budget.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is the lead on the Project for the Province of Nova Scotia. Together with PWGSC, the department co-manages the administration of the cost-share agreement. To effectively protect the federal and provincial government interests in the Project, the provincial department contracted the services of an Independent Engineering Firm (CRA) for the life of the Project. The role of the Independent Engineer is to ensure all design and remediation activities undertaken by the Agency are conducted in accordance with the conditions of the Cost-share Agreement.
Focus on the Community

Sydney is the largest community within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. Its population is a diverse mixture of nationalities including Scottish, Acadian, African Canadian, Mi’kmaq and Eastern Europian. At the core of the industrial community was the Sydney Steel Plant, which once supplied more than half of Canada’s steel production.
In 1968, the Province of Nova Scotia bought the plant and formed Sydney Steel Corp (SYSCO), and the Government of Canada purchased the Coke Ovens under the Crown Corporation Cape Breton Development Corporation (DEVCO). A few short years later, SYSCO took ownership of the Coke Ovens.

When production ceased in 2001, a legacy of contaminated soils, sediments and groundwater remained. Contaminants of concern include Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), Petroleum hydrocarbon compounds (PHCs), Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), and heavy metals.

Following extensive community engagement and consultation, a cleanup plan was approved and the Sydney Tar Ponds Agency was established to implement the Project.

A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) representing six sectors of the community meets regularly to be updated on project activities, and to provide valuable feedback from the organizations they represent. The CLC also serves as a sounding board for governments throughout the implementation of the Project.

The Project has a successful Local Economic Benefits program that has a 15 percent weighting in each contract evaluation. The Project has also signed and implemented an Aboriginal Set-Aside Procurement Strategy with Mi’kmaq First Nations of Cape Breton. It has also developed strategies in the interests of diversity and inclusion for African Nova Scotians, and non traditional career paths for women.
Focus on the Future

Sydney is changing. After decades of hard work and determination, this community is set to reclaim nearly 240 acres (97 hectares) of industrial land located in the heart of its downtown. This historic undertaking includes permanently containing sediment in the Tar Ponds using a cement mix proven to prevent contaminants from spreading into the environment. The hardened material will be capped and the site will be prepped for the next step.

“A world of possibilities will emerge.”
Groundwater from the Coke Ovens will be collected and treated on site to enhance its potential for future use. When completed, a world of possibilities will emerge. Both the federal and provincial partners realized that a plan was needed now to ensure current engineering did not limit future possibilities. So, they commissioned a consulting team led by Ekistics Planning and Design to prepare a Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Land Use plan. With nearly 240 acres (97 hectares) of reclaimed property to layout, the consulting team took the steps needed to gather stakeholder feedback before drafting a vision for the sites.

“The goal of the planning exercise was to prepare a phased land use plan that is logical and achievable, but is also visionary and transformative,” said Gary Campbell, Executive Director of Operations at NSTIR. “When it comes time to implement, the plan should leave a lasting legacy for the entire region.” Legacy goals include: creating lands for public purposes; encouraging new sustainable economic development opportunities; knitting together the surrounding communities; and recounting the proud cultural history of the area in creative and engaging ways. It was decided that a four-year plan would be complemented by a 50-year long-term vision that the community could use as a blueprint for future growth. Although completing the remediation of the Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens sites remains governments’ first priority, both the federal and provincial government partners are focused on achieving components of the four-year plan that fit within the $400 million cost-share agreement.

Those components could include:

- **A Sydney COMMONS** that hosts a high quality sports field(s), washroom facilities, outdoor concert grounds, trail system, watchable wildlife stations, parking facilities, urban forest, etc.
- **A riverside GREENWAY** with trail networks, bridges, boardwalks, docks, rest areas, interpretive station, outdoor exercise stations, signage, an outdoor interpretive pavilion, etc.
- **New ROADS and sidewalks, a new bridge and other community ‘connectors’**
- **A new ‘innovation’ business CAMPUS**
- **COMMERCIAL expansion along the SPAR Road**
- **New INFRASTRUCTURE** that will knit Whitney Pier with downtown Sydney
- **A ‘LAND BANK’** that could be used for short-term use and “banked” so the land can be converted later

These components are the seeds that will lead to future growth, and the enrichment of our social, economic and environmental well-being.