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Dr. Peterson / Dr. Miller:

The purpose of this letter is offer support for the planned "Precambrian Research Center" at UMD. I am a consulting geologist currently contracted as the Chief Geologist for the PolyMet Mining NorthMet Project near Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota.

I have been working in Minnesota since 1989 through UMD Geology (M.Sc.), the Minnesota Geological Survey, the IRRRB, the UMD-NRRI, Minnesota Iron & Steel, Arimetco, and PolyMet. During this time I have seen the pool of geologists capable of working on mineral exploration and development in Precambrian terranes shrink due to retirements and a dramatic lack of younger people entering the field.

For Minnesota to grow a viable minerals industry we need the broader base of basic mapping and data collection that the Research Center would produce, in turn, this expanded knowledge base will encourage companies to risk their exploration and development dollars in our region. This higher level of activity will drive the community of geologists to propose more projects to industry. If well trained geologists leave Minnesota to work elsewhere, they will carry with them information about the mineral potential of the state and be able to bring this to attention of exploration companies that otherwise might not consider working here.

Minnesota has all the components in place to be a major minerals producer: permissive geology, reasonable environmental permitting rules, infrastructure, and a capable workforce; but currently the state lacks the critical mass in skilled entrepreneurial field geologists to bring companies into the area.

Exploration is a high risk and expensive process-for us as a geologic community to move forward we must offer companies the human resources on the ground that they need, the "Precambrian Research Center" seems like the best first step in the growth of a revived Minnesota minerals industry.

While all these concerns are benefits to industry, this business is built on the basic mapping that also serves the needs of the state in land use planning and other areas.

Let me know what I can do to help.

Thanks

Rich Patelke