

Goldcorp Éléonore Mine

WELL AHEAD IN THE
FINAL FURLONG



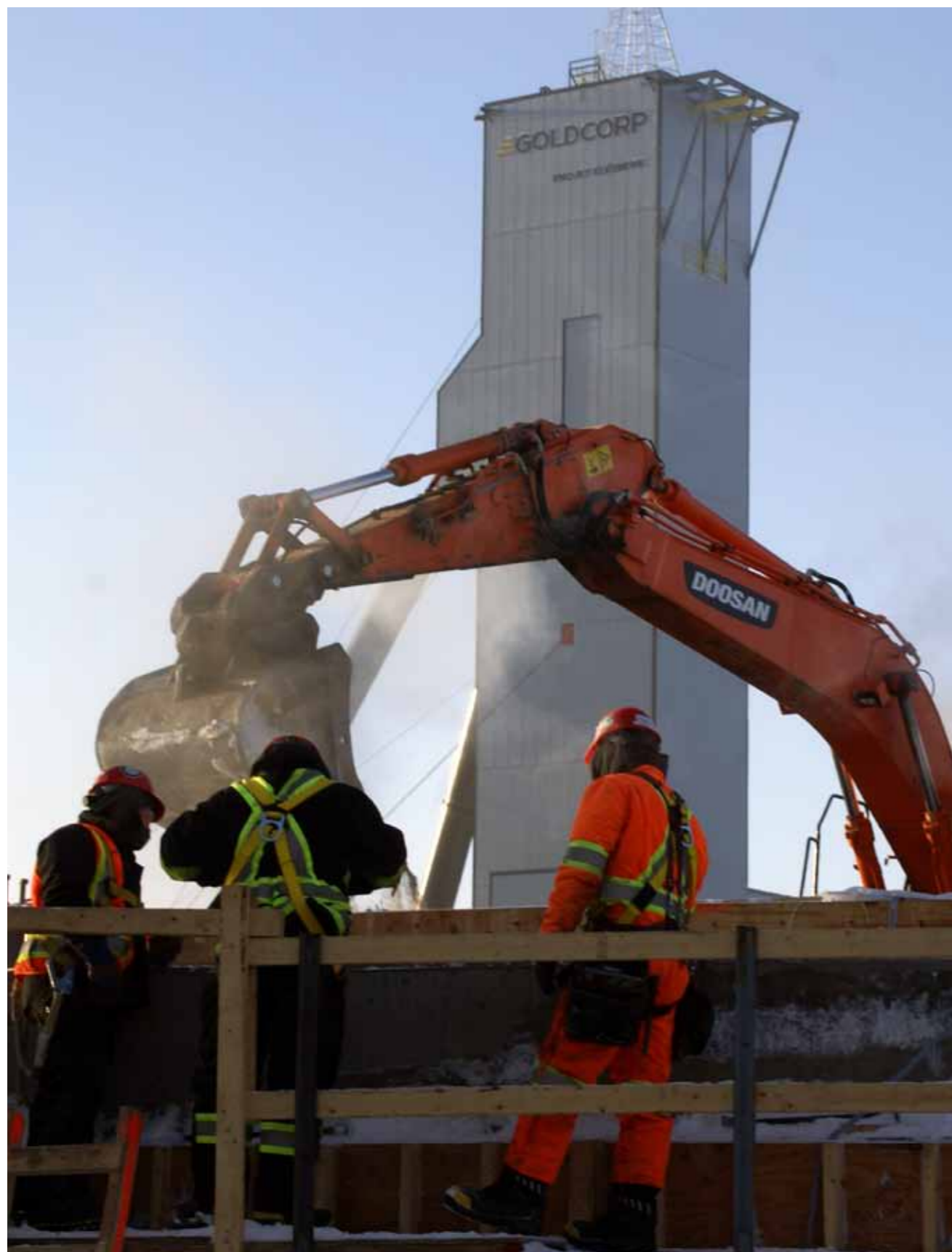


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WELL AHEAD IN **THE FINAL FURLONG**

Goldcorp's Éléonore project in northern Quebec is a copybook example of how to develop a new mine in a sensitive environment by pulling together best practice in every aspect

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It's really not long since we last spoke to Éléonore's energetic site manager Guy Belleau, but in the space of little over eight months – eight months with a severe Canadian winter in them by the way – the site has changed beyond all recognition. Belleau has lost none of his infectious élan. “We are on the last stretch now. I can smell the gold. We promised we would be pouring gold in the last quarter of this year and that is what we will be doing!”

Let's run through some of the things that have happened. Almost all the buildings are up now, he says. All the necessary permits for construction have been awarded. All the contracts have been placed. The exploration shaft is fully operational. The ramp that will bring the ore to the surface is down deeper than 700 metres, while the production shaft

to 20 years. “We are doing lots of diamond drilling to continue to promote resources to reserves and also to allow the definition of our first stopes where we are going to do our first production blast in April. We are currently drilling on a number of new exploration targets.”

It would seem that much of the activity there is preparing the workforce for the ramp up to production. “There is a huge amount of training going on, both on the site and off site, so that we can get ready for the commissioning and the operation of the Éléonore mine.” His passion – for once the word is justified – for recruiting the best people and developing their skills to the utmost remains undiminished. “We are very busy with recruitment and training. It is an intense process but it gives us lots of joy!”

“We are on schedule and in-line with our latest capital cost forecast. Everything is progressing as we planned it”

itself has reached 700 metres. “We are on schedule and in-line with our latest capital cost forecast,” he says with emphasis. “Everything is progressing as we planned it.”

A visitor to the site would now find just 600 construction workers, busy completing the plant, the water treatment plant, as well as the administration building, garage and warehouse. Winter has not yet released its grip on James Bay, but much of this work is being done inside already completed structures. The construction teams are part of a total workforce present at site that now stands around 1,300 people. As well as building a mine and its infrastructure, Goldcorp needs to make the most out of this asset, which is open at depth and is thought to contain resources that will extend its life and productivity well beyond its nominal 15

This is where operational and HR best practices come together in a way he is happy to explain. “I would say we are building one of the best gold mines in the country, if not the world. It is going to have a strong emphasis on technology and world class equipment. The best in class equipment attracts best in class people! We have many applications for every job we advertise.” In the last year, to prove this point, 10,000 resumés have been submitted, so no wonder he finds it a daunting task, but it is a task that is already paying off. “We were successful in appointing the best people in the first batch – and the best people attract more of the same! People want to join Goldcorp for its reputation and the quality of the people they know they will be working with here.”

Of course these aspiring employees are



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“Safety comes first and last every time, in the training programme and out in the field it is always the same topic. Quite simply, safety takes care of our people”

further motivated by their knowledge that they will have a decent lifestyle and, not to put too fine a point on it, creature comforts. The camp where they live has been extended, with 400 new rooms added recently. Each has its own en-suite shower and washroom, flat screen TV with on-demand movies and a queen bed. It is, he claims, a world class installation like a five star hotel. “In my opinion we can stand alongside any other mining facility in the world. That is part of our strategic plan: to recruit and retain the

best people there are in the industry and give them best in class equipment to work with and the best in class training in its use – but that all starts with a best in class camp!”

One thing is missing from that list and it is safety. Safety is more than just a priority, it is a core value, he insists. “Safety comes first and last every time, in the training programme and out in the field it is always the same topic. Quite simply, safety takes care of our people.” The site’s safety record,

which has improved progressively by 20 percent in each of the four years since the project started, is another powerful magnet attracting all those resumés.

Continuous improvement thinking is central to the way he runs the site. There have been countless improvements related to safety as part of a comprehensive CI program called Operating for Excellence, or O4E. This targets each one of the six pillars of Goldcorp – people, safety, partnerships,

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production, reserves and margins, though the three ‘soft’ pillars – the ones beginning with P – drive the others in his opinion. “We are always trying to do things better and smarter. We welcome change with open arms. Even though we think we are doing well in a particular area we are always raising the bar and asking our people how we can do it better.” Not even the kitchens escape scrutiny. Last year costs were reduced significantly through better inventory management, but it’s not there yet: the target is a green cafeteria generating zero waste!

During 2013, he points out, more than 45

Did you know?

10,000

Applications in the last year for jobs at Éléonore

1,300

People currently working on site

O4E projects were undertaken, and 14 more projects have been added this year already tackling issues related to aviation, underground development, surface transportation, fuel efficiency, air efficiency and propane efficiency among many others. “We have a huge playground to improve, even at this stage. When we start the plant there will be plenty more but already we are using fuel, tyres, propane

and all kinds of supplies; we are using underground explosive, drilling tools, carrying out maintenance and breaking rock day after day. Increasing productivity and



“Éléonore will end up a low cost mine, profitable at current prices or worse, and it will start producing on schedule bar a meteor strike”

efficiency and reducing costs improves the business for our shareholders.”

We spoke at length last year about the partnership with the Cree nation of Wemindji and the other communities that the mine affects. That partnership is the foundation of the mine’s success so far and into the

future. Businesses continue to be set up and supported within the community, to add to the ones we highlighted earlier. The company is looking at sourcing such necessities as health and safety equipment, drill bit sharpening services and the manufacture of core boxes locally, providing more job

opportunities in the Wemindji. Outsourcing to Cree-owned companies is altogether feasible. Air Creebec continues to carry out 90 percent of personnel movements and BCC Construction has been engaged for much of the building work, while Tawich Construction, a specialist in mining and civil work, has been one of Goldcorp’s preferred contractors throughout the project. Currently there are some 400 Cree workers on the site either working directly for Goldcorp or its contractors.

Éléonore will end up a low cost mine, profitable at current prices or worse, and it will start producing on schedule bar a meteor strike. But as we have seen it didn’t get here

by accident. Last summer Guy Belleau sent the entire workforce home for more than a week as a precautionary measure when forest fires came close. “They were not that near, but I did not want to take any chances,” he says. Needless to say the lost time was quickly made up. **BE**

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