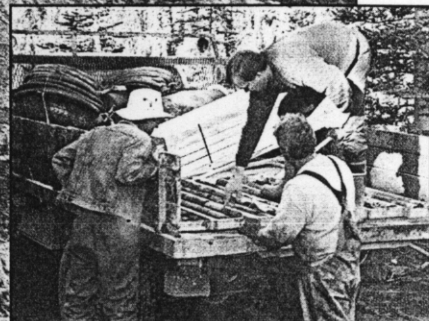


# Imperial Metals

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## The B.C. Silvertip Project Enters the Permitting Process

By Julie Domvile



Photos courtesy of Silvertip Mining Corporation.

*Aerial view of Silvertip Mtn. An open pit is planned for the area in the right-hand side of the photo. Subsequent underground mining will extend mine life to 4 – 6 years with good potential beyond that. (inset left) Diamond drilling at Silvertip. (inset right) Geologist Chris Rees (left) and Project Manager Steve Robertson examine core from a drill hole which intercepted the high grade silvertip mineralization.*

Imperial Metals Corporation (IPM-TSE) has escorted its 100% owned subsidiary, Silvertip Mining Corporation, through the first step in the permitting march towards certification on the Silvertip property. The company has submitted an Environmental Assessment Application (EAA) to the government of British Columbia on the high grade precious and base metal deposit.

The company is currently pushing the project forward within a very aggressive time frame, according to Steve Robertson, Project Manager. The Silvertip rocketed off the back burner with the 1997 \$2 million exploration drill program which identified a

new zone of mineralization that is high grade, thick and close to surface. The resource calculation was updated accordingly to 2.57 million tonnes grading 325 grams per tonne (9.43 ounces per ton) silver, 6.4% lead, 8.8% zinc and 0.63 grams per tonnes gold.

Subject to permitting, the company intends to complete all design aspects for the mine in 1998, have the construction phase completed in 1999, and start production by early 2000.

As things stand now the company plans to initiate production with an open pit for 740,000 tonnes and then proceed underground. The total mine life is 4 to 6 years with "significant

potential for expansion on this time frame," says Robertson.

The Silvertip is a manto deposit which presents a special set of challenges. Robertson explains, "In a manto deposit, the massive sulphide bodies are quite irregular and there is a very sharp contact between mineralization and waste. As a result it is very difficult to quantify how much mineralization is there unless it is drilled off on a very tight grid which makes it expensive to quantify the resource." Most mantos are drilled enough to prove a feasible project and then ensuing exploration is done through mining. Mantos are difficult to explore for, are not very common in the northern

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Cordillera and none are in production in B.C. The Silvertip deposit is "high grade, even for a manto deposit," says Robertson.

Imperial Metals is considering the feasibility of moving its 1,500 tonne per day Goldstream mill near Revelstoke, B.C. to the Silvertip site. "The mill at Goldstream is fairly well suited, with some minor modifications, to process the ore at Silvertip. We would take the key elements and components from the Goldstream mill and move them up to the new facility," said Robertson. It is expected that daily throughput could be increased to at least 2000 tonnes per day with the softer Silvertip mineralization.

Watson Lake, the nearest community, would benefit the most from the mine. While it will be a camp situation, Robertson says the company will try to employ as many local people as possible. The construction phase will employ 150 people and 100 people will be needed for production. He estimates approximately 40 percent of the supplies and purchases would go through the local economy. He is also optimistic that the success of Silvertip will spur more exploration activity in the region and breathe life into some dormant prospects. There are many small deposits in the region that, on their own, do not warrant the expense of a mill, but with Silvertip in full production presenting the option of custom milling, these satellite prospects become more feasible.

Imperial Metals has just put into production its Mount Polley copper/gold mine, near Likely and completed acquisition of the Huckleberry copper/molybdenum mine near Houston, both in British Columbia. Imperial is now free to beam its resources onto the Silvertip and get the project permitted and on the road to production.

At the moment, however, both Mount Polley and Huckleberry are having financial difficulties and Imperial has been working with the B.C. government to keep them alive through the current period of low metal prices. ✕