

The Daily News

Mine deal raises hopes

By CAM FORTEMS
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A deal between Highland Valley Copper and a Vancouver firm provides a faint glimmer of hope the giant operation may be open beyond 2009.

Highland Valley and Getty Copper Inc. announced Friday an agreement that will see drilling start in the new year on adjacent claims held by the Vancouver-based junior exploration company.

"We've done exploration work around the mine in a 10- to 15-kilometre radius around our mill," Highland Valley president Wolf Nickel said Friday.

"We've pretty much covered most of the ground and spent several million dollars. We haven't had success in finding more ore bodies. It's one final effort so we don't overlook anything that could potentially extend mine life."

Exploration will be done by Teck Cominco's exploration group.

Under the terms of a memorandum of understanding, Highland Valley will earn an initial 51 per cent interest in selected Getty claims by spending \$5 million on exploration by the end of 2006.

"It's a last-gasp effort," Nickel said.

Highland Valley Copper and the mine representing 700 workers continued talks toward a new agreement Thursday and Friday. The two sides agreed to a news blackout and won't discuss further negotiations.

Getty Copper director Robert Gardner said the areas of interest to Highland Valley are probable sulfide ore bodies.

"The next two years will show whether there's viability," said Gardner, who started negotiations with Highland Valley's controlling partners Teck Cominco Ltd. and BHP Billiton Inc. six months ago.

Getty Copper has owned claims adjacent and north of Highland Valley Copper for decades. While 143 diamond drill holes have been sunk during that time, no drilling has occurred at the Getty North claims that will be explored under the deal.

Copper prices have shot up — reaching \$1 US a pound this week — since talks started this summer. But Nickel said price of the commodity has nothing to do with the exploration.

"It's one area close that didn't belong to us. ... There's a window of opportunity to find an economic ore body that's less than six years long (estimated mine life)."

Gardner said drilling has not occurred at any of Getty's properties for nearly 10 years.

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KAMLOOPS

The Daily News

Ambitious mining projects coming down the pipe

A junior exploration company will spend \$2 million drilling this year at dormant claims beside Highland Valley Copper.

The exploration program by Getty Copper Inc., on a piece of land beside the giant open-pit copper mine, is in addition to an estimated \$1.3-million geophysical and drilling program undertaken by Highland Valley Copper owner Teck-Cominco Ltd. on other nearby claims.

Both projects involve 210

square kilometres of mineral claims near the mine held by Getty.

TeckCominco's exploration involves a deal with Getty to earn interest on its claims through exploration over several years.

Getty senior investor Gordon Blankstein said Wednesday the junior company listed on the TSX Venture exchange raised \$2 million through a financing that it will use to further explore an area that has already seen 146 drill holes.

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— Getty senior investor
GORDON BLANKSTEIN

The area being drilled by Teck-Cominco has not been explored.

"Deposits are there at Getty North and Getty South," said Blankstein, who was promoting the claim at Wednesday's

Kamloops Exploration Group meeting. "It's finishing the feasibility study to get the deposits in production."

Despite the proximity to Highland Valley's milling operations, Getty's solely owned

copper claims are a different type of copper deposit and not compatible with the existing operation.

Also in the company's ambitious goals are construction of a 400-tonne-a-day pilot plant.

"I hope we'll see major construction in two years," Blankstein said.

Getty was last active in 1997, but its plans to go into production were sidelined by the crash of copper to 65 cents US a pound. Copper prices Thursday were \$1.34 US a pound.