

BY BILL BRADLEY Mining is under



attack. Mining does not need more restrictions to the exploration of Crown lands that hamper developing valuable mineral deposits, said Gord Salo, president of the Sudbury Prospectors and Developers Association about a report issued this week by Gord Miller, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner. As environmental commissioner, Miller monitors compliance by provincial ministries with Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights. Salo's 600 member group reacted strongly against the pronouncement by Miller that the rules for mining have to change. Miller released his annual report Tuesday entitled Reconciling Our Priorities to the provincial legislature. He states, "There are strong arguments that reforms to the Ontario Mining Act and its associated legal mechanisms are needed. The existing regulatory structure treats public land as freely open to mineral development...it is assumed that mineral development is appropriate almost everywhere and that it is the "best" use of Crown land in almost all circumstances. Ontario's Mining Act, and its presumption of free entry for mineral development, impedes land use planning." Miller told CBC Radio Wednesday that the 100 year old Mining Act was antiquated and failed to set aside enough protected space in Northern Ontario. He questioned the wisdom of allowing mining claims to take place on land where the property owner failed to own the subsurface mineral rights. Miller said in his report the area near the Victor Diamond mine on the Attawapiskat River should have been protected and disagreed that further staking outside the billion dollar

Environment commissioner critical of Mining Act, calls for reforms diamond strike be allowed. Joan Kuyek, executive director of Mining Watch, an Ottawa based non-profit group tasked with scrutinizing mining companies, applauded Miller's report. Salo begged to differ with Miller's assessment of the Mining Act. "The Victor Diamond mine will produce some of the finest diamonds in the world. All people of Northern Ontario, all Canadians, should be very proud of this accomplishment, yet half way through the development of the De Beers project the provincial government changed the royalty structures, affecting the financial viability of the whole project. "Now Miller is saying further exploration work, which could expand this treasure trove, should have been banned. That is complete nonsense," he said. Salo said despite the mining riches in Northern Ontario, the province has not been supportive enough of those who find and develop those riches. "I understand there are only six geologists for the whole province. That is like MNR having no gas in their vehicles to catch poachers. That's unacceptable because in that case government does make a positive difference in being there for industry. On the other hand, the Lands For Life Living Legacy process which restricted development on Crown Land, started by premier Mike Harris, claimed that mineral exploration could continue even in lands designated as conservation reserves. That has not happened. I have lost many of my claims," he said. Mining creates opportunities and growth for Northern Ontario, he said. "With forestry collapsing so many people could be employed in the mineral sector. And our young people are cramming Cambrian College mining courses. We could keep them here in our towns, with their families." A new Ontario Mining Association report, Ontario Mining: A Partner in Prosperity Building

by Peter Duncan and Steve Murphy from the University of Toronto, released Thursday morning in Toronto, backs up Salo. "The combined direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of a (typical or) representative mine are extremely large. In its opening or construction phase the mine adds about \$140 million to Ontario GDP and generates almost 2,000 jobs annually. In its production phase, for each year of operation, the mine adds approximately \$280 million to Ontario GDP and increases Ontario's employment by almost 2,300 at a rate of compensation well above the provincial average." The report also states that the provincial government's revenues from a typical mine are also large-\$49 million per year during construction rising to \$84 million per year during production. "Despite the riches here for companies, workers and government, people in southern Ontario who control the north don't realize they are killing the goose that lays the golden eggs when they talk nonsense like what Miller is saying," said Salo.