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## **CRAFT BREWER CHALLENGES MINING EXECUTIVE TO CONTEST**

### **Winner-Take-All Battle for Mining Rights in Union & Warren, Maine**

UNION, Maine, April 1, 2023 – A Maine craft brewer and a Canadian mining executive may soon lock horns in a battle to determine the fate of mineral exploration and mining in Union and Warren, Maine.

The towns are the site of a known nickel deposit beneath scenic Crawford Pond, which spans both communities. In February, executives from mining company Exiro Minerals (Toronto) approached officials of both towns to test the idea of exploring for additional minerals. Citizens soon rallied in opposition, setting up a classic confrontation between corporate and community interests.

To save the time and expense of voting on the matter at Town Meetings in June, Bill Stinson, brewer and owner of The Pour Farm brewery in Union, decided to challenge Shastri Ramnath, CEO of Exiro Minerals to a three-part contest that would effectively determine the fate of mining in the towns.

If accepted by Ramnath and approved by both towns, the unusual challenge would consist of three parts:

Part One is an Oxford style debate on the question: “Mining for heavy metals in a residential area is a good idea.” Ramnath will argue the affirmative; Stinson the negative. Each side will have 5 minutes.

Part Two is a drinking contest, to see which contestant can drink the most Pour Farm beer in 10 minutes. Each participant will use a standard dimension beer bong.

The third and final part is an online poll with a single question: “Which would you rather have in town: The Pour Farm nanobrewery and taproom, or an industrial-scale sulfide ore mine for extracting heavy metals from the ground, with a dedicated wastewater treatment plant, and on-site mining accident emergency room? You can only pick one.” The polls will be open for 10 minutes.

“We think this thing can be wrapped up in half an hour,” said Stinson.

According to the proposal, if Ramnath wins the contest, then The Pour Farm agrees to close the brewery and sell its property to Exiro for one dollar. In this case, Exiro or their partners may initiate blasting immediately, and would be exempt in perpetuity from all liability for the costs of cleaning up acid mine drainage and refilling Crawford Pond with clean water when they are done with it.

If Stinson wins the contest, then Exiro agrees to abandon the mining project, and make contributions of 10 million USD each to: the Town of Union, the Town of Warren, and the Georges River Land Trust. (Town payments would fund clean water and open space initiatives, while the land trust payment would strengthen legal protections against metallic mining in the St. George River watershed.)

Adam Fuller, chairman of the Union Select Board said, “at least this gives us something to talk about besides the Thompson Community Center.”

Observers near and far are betting the brewery owner will prevail. Warren resident Ike Johnson, who has been a regular at The Pour Farm for years, thinks that more comfortable bar stools are still a safe investment for the brewery. “This place ain't going anywhere, and the old stools are getting kind of hard,” he explained. And in far away Las Vegas, gambling pro Erin Peace said that “at 1000/1 odds, the public has a clear message for Exiro: ‘Union and Warren will never be yours to mine.’”