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Latin America mine seminar series gains momentum in Toronto

By: Liezel Hill

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TORONTO (miningweekly.com) – A series of seminars focused on the mining sector and opportunities in specific Latin American countries is drawing increasing interest, organisers said this week.

Bruce Shapiro and **Wayne Floreani**, better known for their MineAfrica seminars, held in London, Toronto and Vancouver for several years now, created a new business division, dubbed 'On the Ground Group', to organise and promote events that do not fit neatly into the mining in Africa category.

On the Ground Group presented a seminar on financing opportunities through the TSX Venture Exchange, aimed at private exploration and development companies, in June and October 2009, and ran the first in its new MineSouthAmerica series – focused on Peru – in May this year.

A seminar on Colombia took place in mid-June, and there are two more events – looking at Mexico and Chile – scheduled in September and November respectively.

The idea was to create a situation in which the presenters know they are talking to an audience that is interested in their jurisdiction, rather than just putting together a random collection of roadshow presentations, Floreani commented.

Interestingly, the country that has generated the most interest during On the Ground Group's marketing efforts was Colombia, according to Shapiro.

The series is sponsored by Canadian law firm Macleod Dixon, which also hosts the events at its corporate office in Toronto's financial district.

Macleod Dixon, which was named global mining law firm of 2010 in the June Who's Who Legal Awards, saw the seminars as a good opportunity to present the firm's strengths to potential clients, partner Janne Duncan said in an interview.

The firm has offices in Calgary, Toronto, Caracas, Bogota, Rio de Janeiro, Moscow and Almaty, and views the energy and mining sectors as key areas of focus and expertise.

Unlike many competitors, Macleod Dixon has built its international offices by hiring local practitioners, who not only have a language advantage, but are certified and experienced in the local environment, Duncan said.

"And I think that On the Ground has been very good for us to get that message to potential clients," she commented.

The On the Ground Group seminars have included presentations from Macleod Dixon partners on issues like dual listing on the TSX and BVL (Peruvian exchange), and a mining investor's checklist for potential investments in Colombia, which relied on the inside information gained from the firm's legal professionals in those countries.

Shapiro said that On the Ground Group tries to hit a balance between corporate presentations from companies – generally exploration and development firms – with activities in the focus country, and commentary and insight from experts like the Macleod Dixon lawyers, investment bankers and others.

Both Shapiro and Duncan said that feedback from the seminars has been positive, and On the Ground Group is actually considering a longer programme for its MineMexico event, scheduled for September 27, because of the interest from prospective presenters.

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