

Congressmen Don Bacon and Adrian Smith Advocate For Nebraska Scandium Under President Trump's Executive Order on Critical Minerals

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CENTENNIAL, Colo., Jan. 17, 2018 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [NioCorp Developments Ltd.](#) ("NioCorp" or the "Company") (TSX:NB) (OTCQX:NIOBF) (FSE: BR3) today praised the efforts of U.S. Congressmen Don Bacon (NE-02) and Adrian Smith (NE-03) to have the Administration include Scandium in the "Critical Minerals" list now being developed in response to President Donald J. Trump's Executive Order of December 20, 2017 ("Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals").

Nebraska stands to emerge as a major global producer of Scandium once NioCorp's Elk Creek Superalloy Materials Project (the "Elk Creek Project") comes online. As currently planned, the Elk Creek Project is estimated to produce more than 100 tonnes of Scandium oxide product annually when it is brought to full-scale production. Current global production of Scandium is estimated by the U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) at only 10-15 tonnes per year.

In a letter to the Secretaries of the Departments of Interior, Energy, Defense and Commerce, the Congressmen urged the Administration to "affirm the critical importance of scandium, a rare earth element with numerous strategic military and civilian uses, by including it in the "Critical Minerals" list called for by President Trump in his December 20, 2017, "Executive Order to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals." The list is expected to be completed by February 20, 2018.

The Congressmen's letter, directed to the Secretaries of the Departments of Defense, Interior, Commerce, and Energy, can be seen here. In it, the Congressmen wrote:

"Scandium is used in a variety of defense and civil applications including lasers, electronics, and high-performance lighting. When added to aluminum, scandium makes an extraordinarily light and strong alloy for use in bulkheads, heat shields, fuel and exhaust systems, aircraft fuselage and landing gear assemblies, mobile bridges, missiles, and other defense systems. In the commercial sector, scandium alloys are poised to drive major advances in commercial aircraft and surface transportation systems through greater fuel efficiency and reduced emissions. Scandium is also a critical component of Solid Oxide Fuel Cells which provide highly efficient and reliable power generation for DoD, NASA, and companies such as Home Depot, Walmart, Apple, Google, and Verizon.

"Despite these strategic uses, today our nation is 100% dependent on imported scandium, primarily from China and Russia. We share the concerns of many of our colleagues in Congress who consider this a significant national security vulnerability for the United States. For this reason, the FY2018 National Defense Authorization Act included language that specifically mentions scandium and the need to develop domestic sources of this strategic material. We also note that the European Union added scandium to its 2017 list of Critical Raw Materials, further illustrating its growing importance in global commodity supply chains.

"Fortunately, efforts are now underway to produce scandium in the United States from multiple sources in the next several years. Known deposits in the State of Nebraska alone have the potential to yield more than 100 tonnes/year of scandium, nearly 10 times the current global production capacity of this critical commodity.

"Assured access to strategic materials is a bedrock requirement for the nation. Therefore, we urge

you to include scandium in the Administration's "Critical Minerals" list that will be published later this year," they concluded.

NioCorp CEO and Executive Chairman Mark Smith praised the efforts of both Congressmen for their ongoing advocacy of superalloy materials like Scandium and of the Nebraska-based Elk Creek Superalloy Materials Project.

"The efforts of Congressmen Don Bacon and Adrian Smith to help advance Nebraska's future as a major superalloy materials producer are making a real difference, and we greatly appreciate their leadership and dedication," said Mr. Smith. "They know that U.S. production of these strategic and critical metals have enormous potential implications to defense and civilian technologies, and that such production also would create new jobs and deliver substantial economic stimulus to Nebraska."

On Behalf of the Board of Directors,

"Mark Smith"

Mark Smith
Executive Chairman, CEO, and Director

Source: [NioCorp Developments Ltd.](#)
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About NioCorp

NioCorp is developing a superalloy materials project in Southeast Nebraska that will produce Niobium, Scandium, and Titanium. Niobium is used to produce superalloys as well as High Strength, Low Alloy ("HSLA") steel, which is a lighter, stronger steel used in automotive, structural, and pipeline applications. Scandium is a superalloy material that can be combined with Aluminum to make alloys with increased strength and improved corrosion resistance. Scandium also is a critical component of advanced solid oxide fuel cells. Titanium is used in various superalloys and is a key component of pigments used in paper, paint and plastics and is also used for aerospace applications, armor and medical implants.

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