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**Week 24 of Windsor Salt Strike**  
**Tentative Agreement at Windsor Salt**



Windsor salt workers rally at City Hall, June 29, 2023

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**Week 24 of Windsor Salt Strike**

**Tentative Agreement at Windsor Salt**

On July 20, the bargaining units for Unifor Locals 240 and 1959 announced they had reached a tentative agreement with the employer, Stone Canyon Industries Holding Inc., on the third day of mediation.

The presentation of the tentative agreements and voting are to take place on Wednesday, July 26 for all three bargaining units. Local 240 represents the clerical and lab workers in both the Ojibway Mine and the evaporation plant and Local 1959's two units represent workers in the mine and the evaporation plant. Nearly 250 unionized workers are on strike at the mine.

Picket lines remain up at both sites. Those who can are encouraged to continue to visit the line to show their support.



# Salt Workers Will Consider the Tentative Agreement Seriously

– Empower Yourself Now –



May Day rally at Windsor Salt picket line

As workers at Windsor Salt prepare to assess the tentative agreement their bargaining committees and the company have reached, there are several things they will seriously consider before they vote. During their now longer than five-month strike, they have faced up to a global cartel which has shown its intent to undermine their union so that they can arbitrarily push the work force around in a manner they consider to be the most profitable. The company used its monopoly on salt extraction and processing in North America to continue filling orders while the Windsor workers were kept idle and put under pressure to give up their struggle.

For more than five months the workers stood their ground and upheld the dignity of labour -- their own and that of all Canadian and Quebec workers who face nation-wrecking in the name of good jobs and a strong economy. Private security agents were used 24/7 to harass and intimidate the workers in an attempt to provoke incidents which the company then pathetically tried to blame on the workers to divide their ranks and to divide the workers from the community. Private investigators were hired by nobody knows who to intimidate workers at their homes, dangling a company \$50,000 reward for information about an alleged incident that the company insinuated the union was responsible for. Despite all difficulties, the workers held the line and upheld their principles and rights.

The workers are clear that the company is not going to abandon its dirty tricks now that there is a tentative agreement, whether it passes or not.

Their own experience and what they have learned from other workers who have dealt with Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. make this very clear. The issue facing them now is to define for themselves where their security lies and how to strengthen their unity and organization as they



discuss the tentative agreement and decide whether to accept or reject it.

The propaganda is that in a strike or mediation both sides walk away unsatisfied and that this is a natural outcome of a process in which two sides have to compromise, be flexible and be ready to "give and take." This is said to be the way the labour relations regime balances competing interests and maintains labour peace. However, labour relations today are no longer premised on "good faith bargaining" that was once seen to provide a measure of fairness.

Today, supranational narrow private interests are after exorbitant windfall profits by using their control of decision-making powers in various countries at the state, provincial and municipal levels. They do not negotiate, they dictate and hold all kinds of power over the workers to deprive them of what belongs to them by right, such as their claims on the added value they produce through their labour. The workers are also very concerned about the production facilities and their role and necessity for nation-building. The need to humanize the natural and social environment is also a matter of concern. Company "negotiating" tactics based on threats and dirty deeds to provoke strikes or lockouts, whose aim is to manipulate outcomes and divide the workers and their communities can and must be fought. The workers' security does not lie in a contract as such but in their fight for their rights and the rights of all.

Whatever the workers decide is based on what can be accomplished at any time but it is not the end of any battle, it is a new beginning, a new starting point in the workers' fight for their rights and the rights of all. Under these most difficult circumstances and in a situation where governments act as an integral part of the cartels rather than on behalf of the people, it is most important for the workers to calmly assess where they stand and take the decision which favours their interests. They are not there to take sides pro or con an agreement because it is the best they can get and the result of mediation, but to assess whether it resolves the current conflict in a manner which favours them.

The salt workers have done themselves and all of us proud by refusing to submit to the company's union-busting dictate and dirty tactics. The labour relations regime permitted the company to obtain injunctions against strike action and continue operating while the workers were denigrated and criminalized for defending their interests. In the strike 12 workers faced criminal charges that the workers demand be dropped. Meanwhile the company faces no repercussions for all of its dirty tricks. It got to walk away from negotiations at a whim, keeping the workers without income, and this is considered normal, okay. But the workers said no, it is not okay and they held the line. They rejected intimidation and extortion.



At every turn of events, the workers strengthened their resolve to hold the line because they know their cause is just, it is necessary. Their future and that of their families and communities and country depends on being an organized union and political force and only the workers, through their deeds, can make it so. Their resistance to the company's dictate and impunity meant that day by day the actions of the company could not be kept hidden. Their resistance inspired others to join in, such as teachers, education workers and fellow workers from many sectors of the economy. The unity and support expressed by fellow salt workers from far and wide was also

priceless. All of this also punctured the official disinformation and government silence about the need to defend actual workers' jobs. The government hands out billions in public funds for mining critical minerals in the name of growing the economy and creating good jobs when the existing good jobs in mining critical minerals like salt are ruthlessly eliminated.

The fact that it is up to the working people to make sure Canadian resources are used to benefit

workers, their families, communities and country, in harmony with the claims of Indigenous Nations on their lands and of nature, became evident during this strike. Working people cannot afford to give up the defence of their rights in the face of attempts to disorganize and disempower them. This is all the more significant given that autoworkers in Unifor will enter into negotiations with the Big Three automakers as well as governments over how electrification of the auto industry will take place and who will benefit. Much has been learned and many have been inspired and emboldened by the salt workers' resistance.

In the course of their strike, the salt workers openly argued out what their experience was teaching them. They were guided by the conclusions they drew and they are sure to do the same when it comes to evaluating the tentative agreement and how to vote.



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## **Information on Salt Production in the Americas**

### **Salt Production on the Magdalen Islands**



**Seleine salt mine on the Magdalen Islands**

Empower Yourself Now spoke with workers from the Seleine Mine operations on the Magdalen Islands in Quebec. These workers have been closely following the salt miners and workers strike in Windsor, Ontario and expressed their support. For the information of our readers, EYN is providing an overview of what they had to say about Seleines Mines, the Magdalen Islands and their economy.

#### **Seleine Mine**

The sodium chloride rock salt mine on the Magdalen Islands located in the centre of the Gulf of St. Lawrence is known as the Seleine Mine. It is 95 per cent pure sodium chloride and is the only salt mine in Quebec, supplying all the road salt for the province. The Seleine Mine also supplies other parts of Eastern Canada such as Newfoundland, as well as the eastern seaboard of the U.S. and France, with road salt. There are seven salt deposits on the Magdalen Islands that were found by the Société québécoise d'exploration minière in 1972. These deposits are known as salt domes because they are very close to the surface. Of the seven, the deposit that is closest to the surface is found on

Grosse Île, where the Seleine Mine is located, some 30 metres below ground. This mine generates close to \$15 million annually for the Islands.

The Seleine Mine was opened in 1982 with a government investment of \$125 million. It was sold in 1988 for \$35 million to the Canadian Salt Company (Windsor Salt).[1] One condition of that sale was that Windsor Salt's headquarters had to be relocated from Toronto to Quebec. It was later purchased by European mining conglomerate K+S Americas, becoming part of the Morton Salt monopoly. Under the umbrella of Morton Salt, it was bought by Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. (SCIH) in 2021. Since SCIH bought the Seleine Mine, four workers have been laid off and the director of the mine was replaced.

The mine employs approximately 200 workers in production as well as a number of engineers and laboratory technicians. They produce more than 1,300,000 metric tons of rock salt per year. The mine works two shifts in a 24-hour period: a day shift from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm and a night shift from 8:00 pm to 6:00 am. The two hours on either end of these shifts are reserved for blasting. The current contract at the Seleine Mine expires in the fall of 2024 and the workers, who are members of the Seleine Mine Workers' Union of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN), are following developments in Windsor, Ontario in order to prepare for the battles they know lie ahead.

A particular concern they want addressed is the erosion of their wages due to the high rate of inflation. The salt workers in Windsor have a cost-of-living provision in their current contract that automatically increases their wages as the cost-of-living rises. This standard is something that does not exist in the contract at the Seleine Mine but is a measure the workers need addressed to keep up with the actual conditions they face. The workers note that the company has a problem retaining staff given the difficult hours of work as younger workers want time with their families.

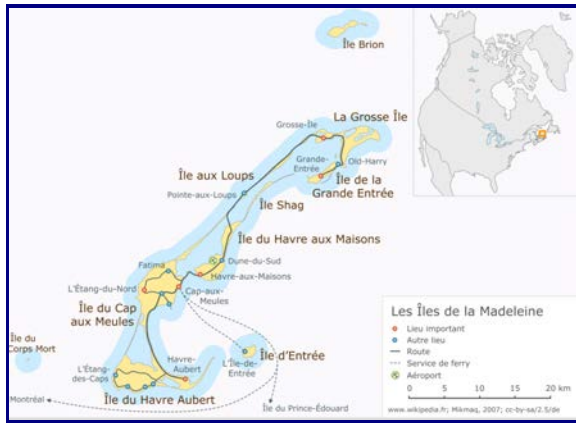
In August 2020, prior to its purchase by SCIH, with the financial support of the Quebec government, Windsor Salt entered into a partnership with Canada Steamship Lines (CSL) to commission a new state-of-the-art diesel-electric self-unloading vessel, the MV *Nukumi*. According to CSL, the vessel was created "to service Windsor Salt's need to deliver de-icing salt from its Mines Seleine salt mine on the Magdalen Islands to stockpiles in Montreal, Quebec City and other destinations within the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland."

The new ship went into service in May of 2022. Its automation decreases the loading time and number of workers required to load the salt onto the boat -- sensors and machines are used to evenly load the ship instead of having to move the ship during loading to spread the load. The workers who do the loading on the ship are contract workers. The new ship is also faster than previous ships, can run in shallower waters and manoeuvre better; meaning that it can chart waters prior ships could not. It emits less carbon emissions as a result of the diesel-electric motor.

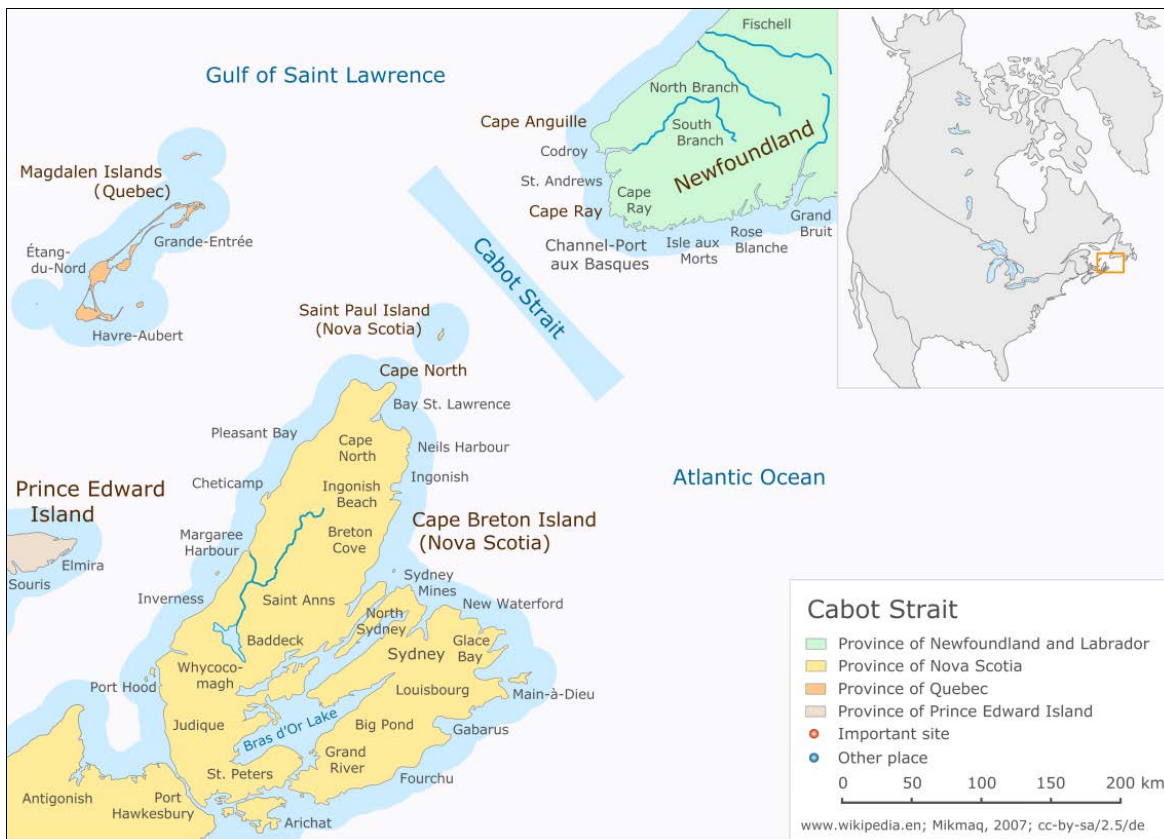
## **The Magdalen Islands and Their Economy**

The Magdalen Islands are an archipelago in the Gulf of the St. Lawrence that constitute part of the Epegwitg aq Pigtug district of Mi'kma'ki (the Mi'kmaw Nation) who call the islands Menagoesenog, meaning "wave swept islands." There are seven inhabited islands of the archipelago, six of which are linked by a main road, which runs an approximate distance of 85 kms along Route 199. The seventh island, Entry Island, is no longer inhabited and is only accessible by boat

The Magdalen Islands are part of the Province of Quebec, although they are much closer to the maritime provinces and Newfoundland and Labrador than to the Gaspé Peninsula. They are situated 700 km away from Quebec's mainland and approximately 150 km from Prince Edward Island. The Magdalen Islands are accessible by air from various starting points to Dune-du-Sud or by ferry from Souris, PEI to Cap-aux-Meules. The ferry trip takes approximately five hours.



Historically, the Mi'kmaq would travel to the archipelago seasonally to fish. The islands would become a refuge for Acadians during the Great Deportation (1755-1764) carried out by the British colonialists, who sought to eliminate opposition to their occupation of Acadia, shortly after the British captured Fort Beauséjour during the Seven Years' War. The inhabitants of the Magdalen Islands, 85 per cent of whom still identify as Acadians today, are known as Madelinots.



## Economy of the Magdalen Islands

The total population on the Magdalen Islands is approximately 15,000. The primary industry there is fishing for both fish and shellfish, largely lobster and snow crab. This industry brings in approximately \$80 million per year to the island and markets include Canada and Quebec. The fisheries employ approximately 2,000 fishers, assistant fishers and plant workers. In Quebec, the Magdalen Islands is where there is the greatest concentration of young fishers. For inhabitants of the Magdalen Islands, fishing is a way of life that has been passed down through generations.

The second largest industry of importance to the local economy on the Magdalen Islands is tourism. This industry generates approximately \$50 million per year and includes 1,400, mostly full-time,

direct, indirect and seasonal jobs. This industry has grown since the 1960s and now includes just over 200 tourism companies. Today, 90 per cent of visitors come to the Magdalen Islands during July and August, and the annual tourist season is from June to September.

Another major employer for the islands is the social service sector. This sector represents approximately 1,800 jobs in government services, education and healthcare. Cap-aux-Meules has the largest concentration of people on the entire archipelago of the Magdalen Islands, and it is on this island that there is a hospital, schools, including a CEGEP, and a thermal power station, which generates the vast majority of power for the islands.

## Note

1. "Les débuts de l'exploitation de sel aux Îles-de-la-Madeleine," Radio Canada, August 15, 2017.



# Untapped Salt Deposit in Newfoundland and Labrador



A salt deposit in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is called the "Great Atlantic Salt Deposit" by its current owners Atlas Salt, could be one of the biggest in the world. According to the company it is "strategically positioned in the heart of the robust Eastern North America road salt market that relies heavily on overseas imports to meet annual demand." The deposit is located in the Bay St. George Basin on the west coast of Newfoundland next to important infrastructure, including a deep water port, Turf Point.

Atlas Salt claims to investors that Great Atlantic and the Goderich mine in Ontario share similar geological characteristics, though the Great Atlantic deposit starts at a depth more than 300 metres shallower than Goderich and has a salt bed that is thicker than Goderich "by orders of magnitude." The company claims it is unusually shallow by industry standards and that geotechnical data continues to support the objective of accessing the salt through an inclined ramp "as a unique and highly efficient mining method among North American salt deposits."

Atlas is also the largest shareholder in Triple Point Resources Ltd., which is applying to be listed on the Canadian Securities Exchange. Triple Point owns Newfoundland's only known salt dome (Fischell's) located 15 km south of Great Atlantic. Fischell's is being touted for its potential for

underground energy storage for hydrogen gas in multiple salt caverns, which the company says makes it a key asset in the heart of Newfoundland's emerging "Clean Energy Hub."

A 2021 piece in the investment blog *Bull Market Run* titled "The Emerging North American Salt War" predicts that the Atlas Salt mine will become a target for two cartels which control salt production in Canada: Compass Minerals and Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. Compass owns the Sifto salt mine in Goderich, Ontario, the biggest rock salt mine in the world. Atlas President Rowland Howe is the former mine manager of the Sifto mine. Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. owns Windsor Salt and its operations in Windsor, Ontario, Pugwash, Nova Scotia and on the Magdalen Islands in Quebec.

If such a large salt deposit can be mined with the most modern techniques and shipped easily it can be a huge asset for Canada and the world. However, under the control of narrow private interests it will be used to attack and even shut down regional salt production in other parts of Canada by attacking the salt workers in these operations with claims that they are no longer needed. This is already being speculated -- that if Stone Canyon takes control of the Great Atlantic Salt Deposit, it can then shut down older operations, such as the one in Pugwash, Nova Scotia, as it did with its evaporation plan in Lindbergh, Alberta.

Canada's natural resources like salt should be developed in an environmentally responsible manner that serves the needs of Canada and its northern climate. Left in the hands of holding companies that operate as cartels Canada's natural resources are squandered and used to extort governments and workers. A new direction for the economy is required in which Canada's vast natural resources are under the control of the working people and governments they form which can put them at the disposal of nation-building, not nation-wrecking.



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## Stone Canyon's Control Over Salt Production in the Americas

In April 2021, when Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. purchased K+S Americas Salt division it took control of significant rock salt deposits, mines and facilities in South America and the Caribbean in addition to those in the U.S. and Canada. Its acquisition included operations in Chile, Peru and the Bahamas. In June 2023, it added another one in Brazil.

### Bahamas





Stone Canyon owns the second-largest solar salt operation in North America outside Matthew Town on the island of Great Inagua, Bahamas, known as Morton Bahamas. Inagua is the most southerly and third largest island of the Bahamas, in close proximity to both Cuba and Haiti. The above-ground facility harvests sea salt using sun and wind evaporation from 80 salt ponds and is the island's main employer. It processes around a million tonnes of salt annually for different purposes, including road salt, with the U.S. being its main export market. It also exports salt to Canada and a number of other countries.

As early as the 1600s, salt was being produced and shipped to Spanish colonies from Inagua and its extraction was a going business by 1803. By 1918, after the end of World War I, lower salt prices and competition had driven the small producers on Great Inagua out of business, and the salt works were abandoned except for incidental local use. In 1935, the Erickson brothers from the U.S. founded West India Chemicals Ltd., purchasing the abandoned salt works from the British government. The operation has been Inagua's main industry since that time. Morton Salt bought the facility in 1954.

In July 2021, 3 months after taking over ownership of Morton Salt, Stone Canyon terminated 24 senior employees from the Bahamas operation, reducing employment by more than 20 per cent. In a statement, Morton Salt said: "We can confirm Morton Salt made the difficult decision to reduce staff at its salt production facility located in Inagua, Bahamas. This was not a decision we took lightly, but after a comprehensive evaluation of our facility's recent operating efficiency and production levels, the staff reduction was necessary to sustain the *long-term viability* (*emphasis added*) of our Inagua facility, where we have operated since 1954."

In an interview with Nassau-based television program *Eyewitness News*, Trade Union Congress President Obie Ferguson said the terminations included 17 line staff and seven supervisors, with at least six of them having worked with the company for over 35 years, and some workers having been employed up to 46 years. At that time Ferguson raised the fact that the company was refusing to follow the contract with the workers which entitled them to redundancy pay of up to 40 weeks. He informed that Morton Salt said it would pay up to two weeks per year, up to a maximum of 26 weeks, for the workers it had terminated, in contempt of the contract. Further, Morton Salt had not even notified the union of the layoffs.

"It is criminal for a major multinational corporation to have entered into an agreement with the union, supervised to a great extent and shared by the minister, encouraged by the minister to reach the agreement and now to completely disregard what has been agreed to between the parties," Ferguson said. "That is the reason why I said, as president of the Trade Union Congress, we are regressing as a people, as workers."

The layoffs by Stone Canyon followed layoffs of 11 workers previously by K+S in January 2021, also said to be done in order to sustain the "long-term viability" of the operation. At that time K+S had already signed a contract with Stone Canyon for the sale of the business.

In September 2021, Jennifer Brown, president of the Bahamas Industrial, Manufacturers & Allied Workers Union (BIMAWU), told the Bahamian newspaper *The Tribune* that the operation was now severely short staffed and that the company would likely have to hire new employees to keep running. "Because this new company took over, they just wanted to reduce the staff to see how many people they really needed. I believe they might have to rehire a lot of people. This is just from my general observation, because we used to have over 200 employees, but now we don't even have 80, yet they expect the work to get done," Brown said.

"It is near impossible to do the same level of work with less than half of the staff that Morton Salt was used to in the recent past, which is only part of the problem. The thing is that the workers are not being compensated for the heavier workload. Every department they let someone go and people have positions they need filled. So we are just going to basic and important stuff now, and the rest just lags behind and when you get to it, you get to it," she said. Brown also said workers were

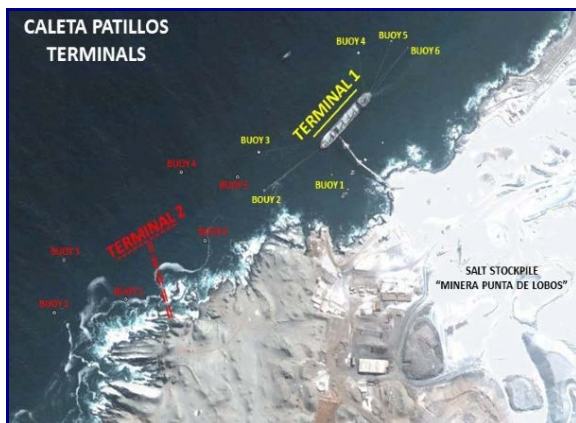
"walking on eggshells" as a result of the last layoffs. However, she added that maintenance on machinery is now lacking. "Things we never used to do before, they are asking employees to do it now, and they feel unsafe."

## Chile and Peru



Competition between Stone Canyon and Compass is on the horizon in Chile as well. In its 2022 annual report, Compass Minerals stated: "In 2012, we acquired mining rights to approximately 100 million tons of salt resources in the Chilean Atacama Desert. This resource estimate is based upon an initial assessment. A feasibility study would be completed before we decide whether to proceed with the development of this project to ensure the salt resources can be converted into reserves. The development of this project will require significant infrastructure to establish extraction and logistics capabilities." Compass touted its Chilean acquisition as one of the highest-quality salt resources it had located, and that it "secures our access to one of the lowest-cost mining regions in the Western Hemisphere."

In the northern Chilean province of Iquique, Stone Canyon owns a big open pit salt mine in the 45-km long, 4 to 5-km wide Salar Grande salt flat in the Tarapacá region of the Atacama Desert. The Tarapacá mine sits 30 km from two Pacific ports, Patillo I and II, that can accommodate ships carrying up to 100,000 tons. The mine and operations linked to it continue to go by their original name, Sociedad Punta de Lobos S.A. (SPL). Most of SPL's salt products are marketed under the Lobos brand.



SPL salt was founded in 1905. It was purchased by Stone Canyon Industries Holdings Inc. from the German mining monopoly K+S in 2021 when it bought its Americas division.

The Tarapacá mine is shallow, with salt found at a depth of about 100 metres. The salt extracted is of a very high quality of sodium chloride, in the range of 99 per cent pure, meaning it does not require extra processing to remove impurities. The arid climate means salt that is exposed once extracted is not lost to dissolution from rain. All of these factors along with the exploitation of Chilean miners contribute to Chile being considered a desirable source of salt by the monopolies because of the relatively low cost of production. The reserves are said to be immense and some claim they could last for another 5,000 years.

Road de-icing salt from Tarapacá is mostly shipped to the East coast of the United States A smaller

quantity of salt is processed at the nearby port into table salt for markets in Chile, Bolivia and Peru.

Stone Canyon also owns and operates SPL Peru, which serves as a packaging and distribution centre for Lobos Salt at Peru's main commercial seaport, Callao. In total, Stone Canyon has 6 distribution centres on the Pacific coast of South America, five of them in Chile, and one on the Atlantic in northern Brazil.

A December 2022 report carried by the Chilean online news site *Emol* provided information regarding salt exports from Chile, saying that its exports have been growing recently. Between January and October 2022 exports amounted to over U.S.\$148 million, a 23.2 per cent increase over the same period in 2021. U.S. destinations accounted for 56.9 per cent of those exports, an increase of 12 per cent over the year before. The main product exported to the U.S. is road salt. According to private company reports accessed by the news agency, in 2020 Chile exported 6,428,414 tons of salt, with K+S (before Stone Canyon took over) accounting for the lion's share -- 73 per cent of the market.[1]

Shipments in 2022 over the same months were mostly by Stone Canyon's SPL and went to Baltimore (1,820,051 tons); Newark (596,038 tons); Boston (351,699 tons); and New Orleans (233,183 tons). Windsor Salt workers in Pugwash, Nova Scotia also report that in the past salt from operations in Chile has been shipped to Canada and mixed with their salt, that is of a lower grade, so it can be sold at a higher grade.

## Brazil



In June 2023, through its subsidiary SPL Salt Chile, Stone Canyon acquired the Brazilian Salinas de Diamante Branco (SDB) salt operation in Galinhos in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. The operation has a port adjacent to it. SDB's website says it is one of the main salt producers in Brazil with the capacity to produce around 700,000 tonnes of salt annually. The salt is obtained through evaporation from a seaside salt flat then refined to produce different grades of salt. It sells to both the domestic and export market, shipping salt for industrial, consumer, agricultural and road de-icing to other countries in South America, to the Eastern U.S., as well as locations in Europe and Africa.

## Note

1. "Alerta en la industria de la sal: Cómo opera en Chile, sus principales actores y la amenaza en Nueva York." *Emol*. Ignacio Munita C., December 2, 2022.



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# Stone Canyon, the "Buy America" Provisions and Canada

One of the issues facing Stone Canyon in the U.S. is the "Buy America" provisions and how that will lead it to shift operations to maintain its U.S. market share. There is a possibility that road salt imported to New York State from outside the U.S. could be "halted" by the State's new *Buy American Salt Act*. That would mean Stone Canyon will have to find other markets for its Chilean salt to replace those it stands to lose in New York. Every year New York City alone buys over 300,000 tons of salt for use on its streets in the winter, with most of it coming from Chile.

On December 22, 2022, when the Governor of the State of New York signed the *Buy American Salt Act* into law, the State's website emphasized that "New York has at least two salt mines that provide rock salt for road de-icing and offer good-paying jobs." This refers to one mine owned by U.S. Salt, which is said to be independent of any of the major salt monopolies, while the other is owned by agri-monopoly Cargill, said to be a "family-run business." A news report on the Act indicates, however, that exemptions are possible "if the pricing for domestic salt is higher than international prices and if there isn't enough inventory in the local mines."<sup>[1]</sup>

In Canada, Stone Canyon is in direct and heated competition for control of the salt market with Kansas-based Compass Minerals which owns the Goderich mine, the biggest rock salt mine in the world.

## Note

1. "NYC imports road salt from Chile, but a new bill would have the city buy local." Sophia Chang, *Gothamist*, September 29, 2022.



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Website: [www.cpcml.ca](http://www.cpcml.ca) Email: [editor@cpcml.ca](mailto:editor@cpcml.ca)