Critical Minerals Institute to Lead Supply Chain and Rare Earths Discussions in Atlanta

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CMI Executive Director Tracy Hughes, Co-Chair Melissa Sanderson and Director Constantine Karayannopoulos will join industry leaders at Critical Minerals Expo North America on October 28–29, 2026

Toronto, Ontario – August 14, 2026 – The Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) is pleased to announce its participation as a supporting organization of Critical Minerals Expo North America, Battery Recycling Expo North America and E-Waste World Expo North America, taking place October 28–29, 2026, at the Cobb Convention Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

CMI will help lead two sessions within the Critical Minerals Conference, bringing its international leadership and industry network to discussions on North America's critical minerals supply chain and the security of the rare earths value chain. The events arrive as governments and manufacturers are accelerating investment in domestic production, processing and recycling capacity, while competition intensifies for the materials and industrial capabilities required by defense, advanced manufacturing, energy and technology.

On Wednesday, October 28, from 11:20 a.m. to noon, CMI Executive Director Tracy Hughes will moderate the fireside chat "Expert Overview of North America's Critical Minerals Supply Chain – Where Are We Going?" The discussion will feature Melissa "Mel" Sanderson, Co-Chair of CMI, and Constantine Karayannopoulos, President of privately held Kloni Inc. and a Director of CMI.

Sanderson brings more than three decades of experience at the intersection of diplomacy, mining and sustainable development. During her 21 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, she served as a senior diplomat and Chargé d'Affaires leading the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she played an important role in rebuilding U.S.–DRC relations following years of conflict.

She subsequently joined Phelps Dodge Corporation to support the development of the Tenke Fungurume copper-cobalt project in the DRC and continued with Freeport-McMoRan Inc. (NYSE: FCX) following its acquisition of Phelps Dodge. As Vice President for Africa and later Vice President of International Affairs, Sanderson led government, community and public relations and sustainable development initiatives in the DRC before assuming broader international responsibilities across Freeport-McMoRan's global operations.

Karayannopoulos is one of the architects of the modern Western rare earths industry. A co-founder of Neo Performance Materials Inc. (TSX: NEO | OTCQX: NOPMF), he led Neo and its predecessor companies for more than 25 years, serving at various times as President, CEO and Chairman. He also served as interim President and CEO and later Chairman of Molycorp, Inc. (formerly NYSE: MCP).

Karayannopoulos also co-founded and served as non-executive Chairman of Neo Lithium Corp. (formerly TSXV: NLC | OTCQX: NTTHF | FSE: NE2) until its approximately C$960 million acquisition by Zijin Mining Group Co., Ltd. (SSE: 601899 | HKEX: 2899) in 2022.

On Thursday, October 29, from 10:30 to 11:10 a.m., Hughes will moderate "Rare Earths – How Do We Keep the Entire Supply Chain Safe?" with Mark Wall, Chief Executive Officer of American Rare Earths Limited (ASX: ARR | OTCQX: ARRNF | ADR: AMRRY). Both sessions are scheduled for the Critical Minerals Conference in Main Expo Hall A.

“Atlanta is precisely where these conversations should be taking place. The Southeast is rapidly becoming one of North America’s most important centres for battery production and advanced manufacturing, yet the success of that investment ultimately depends on secure critical minerals, processing expertise and resilient supply chains,” said Tracy Hughes, Executive Director of the Critical Minerals Institute. “CMI looks forward to joining Mel, Constantine, Mark and the wider conference community for direct, senior-level discussions about what North America must build, finance and protect next.”

Organizers expect the three co-located events to attract more than 1,500 industry professionals, 150 exhibitors and 60 expert speakers. The combined program spans mining, mineral processing and refining; battery materials and recycling; electronics recycling and IT asset disposition; metals recovery; manufacturing technology; investment; and public policy.

A single complimentary registration provides industry professionals with access to all three exhibitions and conference programs across both days, creating a forum that follows critical minerals from extraction and processing through manufacturing, recovery and recycling.

Event Details

Dates: Wednesday, October 28 and Thursday, October 29, 2026
Venue: Cobb Convention Center, Two Galleria Parkway, Atlanta, Georgia 30339
Format: Three co-located exhibitions and free-to-attend conference programs

Registration: Register to attend

The conference agenda is preliminary and session details are subject to change. Visit criticalmineralsexpona.com for the latest program information.

About the Critical Minerals Institute

The Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) is a global think tank and central hub for the critical minerals ecosystem, connecting companies, capital markets, and policymakers. Through its monthly **CMI Masterclasses**, twice-monthly ***Critical Minerals Report*** (CMR) and **CMR Podcast** episodes, bespoke research, and board-level advisory services, CMI delivers actionable intelligence spanning exploration finance, supply chains, industrial policy, and geopolitics.

CMI tracks 12 leading national and multilateral critical minerals lists and applies a rigorous comparative process to independently select and maintain its proprietary **CMI Watchlist**. Materials are evaluated against one another based on strategic importance, supply-chain concentration, geopolitical exposure, substitutability, and relevance to defense, technology, and economic security. Through its strategic partnership with the **Critical Minerals Platform** (CMP), CMI offers Platinum members access to independent mineral pricing, market forecasts, corporate intelligence, and global supply-chain data.

CMI also organizes its flagship annual event, **CMI Summit 6**. Held under the theme ***Critical Minerals Diplomacy in a Fragmented Global Economy***, the Summit brings together government leaders, institutional investors, policymakers, and industry executives from around the world. **CMI Summit 6** will take place May 17–18, 2027, at Toronto’s Fairmont Royal York.

For more information, go to CriticalMineralsInstitute.com

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