Greenland Is Not the Critical Minerals Answer. Canada Is.

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Greenland has increasingly been framed in public debate as a potential cornerstone of future critical minerals supply. Yet in a wide-ranging conversation with InvestorNews.com host Tracy Hughes, Jack Lifton, co chair of the Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) and one of the world's most respected critical minerals experts, challenged that narrative directly. Lifton argued that claims surrounding Greenland's mineral potential routinely blur a critical distinction between geological occurrence and economically recoverable reserves, leading to conclusions that are not supported by technical or financial reality.

Asked whether Greenland holds large, untapped critical minerals reserves, Lifton was unequivocal. "I would say no," he said, stressing that the term *reserves* has a precise technical meaning. "When you say reserves, you're talking about things that we can economically and efficiently recover. I don't think that that's the case in Greenland." The distinction, he noted, is frequently lost in media coverage, where the presence of minerals in the ground is often conflated with commercial viability.

That misunderstanding carries geopolitical consequences. As Washington once again signals interest in Greenland as a strategic asset, Lifton warned that the United States risks misreading the broader competitive landscape, particularly with respect to Canada. With European governments openly prioritizing independence in critical minerals supply, he argued that Ottawa is positioning itself accordingly. "Canada's vast resources of critical minerals are going to go to the highest and friendliest

bidder," Lifton said. "In my opinion, that's going to be first of all the European Union and the UK, and second, some people in Asia that maybe the United States is not so friendly with."

The issue, in Lifton's view, is not ambition but expertise. While some Americans admire Donald Trump's aggressive negotiating style, Lifton questioned its applicability to natural resource development. "His expertise does not extend to natural resources," he said. "The world of critical resources is a different world from building golf courses. And I don't think it's going to work out." Natural resource supply chains, he emphasized, are capital intensive, slow to build, and resistant to political pressure.

This same misunderstanding underpins the widely repeated claim that China "controls" the world's rare earths. Lifton rejected that framing. "China as a nation seems to have about 40% of the known reserves," he said. "That means that the rest of the world has 60%." China's dominance, he explained, lies not in geology but in execution. "They have the overwhelming majority of the downstream supply chain. That's the problem." The real chokepoints are not mines, but downstream processing.

Viewed through that lens, Greenland's appeal weakens further. Proposals to build advanced rare earth processing facilities there fail basic feasibility tests. "Not only does the infrastructure not exist," Lifton said, "the people to manufacture the infrastructure don't exist." He estimated that developing comparable downstream capacity in Greenland could cost roughly ten times more than doing so in Quebec, which already hosts promising deposits alongside power, water, transport, and skilled labor.

Timelines do little to improve the case. Suggestions that Greenland could become a rare earth producer within a decade

ignore political and financial realities. “Ten years… means two and a half presidential administrations,” Lifton observed, citing shifting congressional priorities and policy instability. “How does that benefit anybody?” Private capital, he added, is the ultimate test. “If private equity that understands how to use money in the most profitable way is not jumping into this arena, it means this arena is dangerous.” Governments, by contrast, have a long record of absorbing losses.

When asked where rare earth downstream development is realistically achievable, Lifton’s answer was direct. “That’s easy. It’s Canada,” he said, pointing to its combination of deposits, infrastructure, water resources, and technical expertise. Australia followed, though with structural limitations, while the United States lagged due to a shortage of viable projects and, in his words, “a whole lot of inexpert opinion to guide it.”

His guidance to Washington was similarly straightforward. “Focus on Canada as a source of critical materials and minerals,” Lifton said. “Canada has everything we need.” But he coupled that advice with a warning: “We’re going to lose Canada,” he cautioned, as Ottawa deepens economic ties with Europe and Asia to diversify markets and reduce dependency.

Elsewhere, Lifton dismissed Venezuela as “uninvestable” and described a global economy increasingly split between United States and China centered blocs. Canada’s positioning, he argued, is pragmatic rather than ideological. India, meanwhile, remains underappreciated in Western discourse despite its scale. “They are developing a national rare earth industry,” Lifton said, spanning mining through magnet manufacturing. “They don’t need us for a customer.”

The contrasts were stark. India versus Greenland? “India every

time.” Brazil versus Greenland? Brazil, with vastly larger deposits and a population of more than 200 million. Africa versus Greenland? “Africa has a billion people. Greenland, 60,000. Which one would you choose as a future source?”

By the end of the discussion, Greenland’s role in the critical minerals conversation appeared less a mining strategy than a strategic proxy. The United States, Lifton suggested, has long viewed Greenland primarily through a military lens. “The Greenland critical minerals story is simply a cover up,” he said, obscuring strategic considerations that predate the current debate.

In closing, Lifton allowed a moment of dry humor. Recalling that his only visit to Greenland was a refueling stop, he remarked, “I doubt that golfing on ice is a good idea.” In a debate dominated by rhetoric and geopolitics, the message remained grounded: mineral policy must be built on economics, infrastructure, and facts.

- The Greenland Critical Minerals (and Rare Earths) Myth, Dispelled https://bit.ly/4jrqwQa
- WATCH: The Greenland Critical Minerals Fantasy and the Military Reality. https://bit.ly/4aPPMgQ