

# Exploring the FUTURE

## MINING AND MINERAL EXPLORATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia is well known as a leading producer of coal and metals such as copper, gold, silver, zinc and lead. A lesser known but growing part of the province's mining industry produces industrial minerals for the ceramic, chemical, construction, fertilizer and glass making industries, among others. British Columbia's industrial mineral production was valued at \$51.4 million in 2000; structural material and aggregate production was worth more than \$500 million. With approximately 12,000 known mineral occurrences, the province is poised for new growth and development in this sector.

## INDUSTRIAL MINERALS

### Industrial Mineral Production

British Columbia has more than 40 active industrial mineral mines, most of which operate in the southern half of the province. Some of the mines produce high value minerals, including magnesite, gypsum, limestone, shale, silica, sulphur, white calcium carbonate, basalt, dimension stones, such as granite and marble, construction aggregates and crushed rock.

These and other industrial minerals support more than 20 value-added and downstream industries in British Columbia, generating products worth more than \$100 million a year.

### Potential for Future Development

British Columbia has an abundance of undeveloped industrial minerals, located throughout the province. A publicly accessible inventory database includes detailed descriptions of 12,000 mineral occurrences and a library of over 25,000 mineral assessment reports.

Industry development is currently focused on:

- developing new export markets for products such as graphite, magnesite, hydromagnesite, gem stones, wollastonite, asbestos and rare earths;
- developing domestic supplies of minerals such as talc, kaolin, garnet, phosphate, perlite and peat to reduce reliance on imports;
- increasing value-added processing of minerals such as magnesium metal; and,
- developing environmentally-friendly applications using "green" industrial minerals such as zeolites for absorbing heavy metals, pozzolans as a substitute for limestone in cement, and olivine for zero-emission coal power plants.

### For more information, contact:

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