Towards a Sustainable Future

150 Years of Mining
British Columbia is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Gold Rush and the B.C. mining success story.

Our earliest explorers crisscrossed this vast province 150 years ago to uncover our province’s natural mineral resources.

These extraordinary individuals, alone and often with the simplest of tools, carved out and laid claim to the province’s first discoveries of gold, copper and coal.

Moving from pick and shovel to the 21st century, digital mapping, mineral titles online, geoscience and other modern technologies have revolutionized at a rapid pace the way exploration and mining is done in British Columbia.

**B.C. MINING SUCCESS STORY**

Today, mining in B.C. is an estimated $5.6 billion industry – almost double what it was in 2001.

Last year, the exploration industry boosted spending in the province to an historic all-time record of $416 million.

The mining sector is now one of the most vibrant areas of job creation in the province. More than 28,000 people in 50 communities throughout the province are employed in the minerals and coal economy.
New northeast B.C. coal mines could generate up to 1,000 new full-time jobs and $1 billion in investment by 2010.

There were more than 470 exploration projects around the province in 2007 – an increase of more than 50 per cent since 2003. One hundred of these had budgets in excess of $1 million.

There are currently more than 50 metal, coal and industrial mineral mines in production in B.C., including eight new mines that have opened in recent years. In addition, there are numerous new mines in the pipeline.

**B.C. LEADS THE WAY IN PROTECTING PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Along with this record activity, British Columbia’s mining community is leading by example in protecting our people and the environment and ensuring the sustainable development of our natural resources.

Government is working hand in hand with First Nations and the mining sector to ensure mining exploration and development are done in an environmentally responsible, socially inclusive and economically viable manner. We are also committed to making sure mining remains one of the safest heavy industries in this province.

We were one of the first provinces to enact reclamation legislation and are a national leader in state-of-the-art reclamation projects.
To date more than 18,000 hectares of previously mined land has been reclaimed and returned to its natural state – land now primarily used for forestry, grazing, recreation and wildlife habitat. Former mining pits and quarries have also been rehabilitated into world-famous tourist attractions – attractions such as Butchart Gardens near Victoria and Queen Elizabeth Park in Vancouver. Lafarge Lake, a former gravel pit in Coquitlam, is now a trout fishing lake.

PROTECTING TAXPAYER DOLLARS

The days of miners abandoning old picks or other prospecting tools are long gone. Mining companies are expected to clean up after themselves, and at their own expense. Under current rules, taxpayers do not pay for remedial action involving any new mines.

Mining permits are not issued until every aspect of an operation is mapped out – from beginning exploration, through construction to the operation of the mine, to the reclamation at the end of a mine’s life.

Mining companies must post performance bonds for reclamation security that keeps pace with development of the site. This way if the company fails, reclamation can occur without taxpayer dollars. Our legislation has helped make British Columbia a world leader in reclamation practices, with many B.C.-based mining projects receiving awards for their reclamation efforts.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT HONOURED

Every year, the Mining Association of British Columbia and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources honour those committed to advancing and promoting sustainable development in the B.C. mining sector with the prestigious Mining and Sustainability Award.

2007 WINNER

Fording River Operations, recognized as a world leader in mine safety and reclamation, won the 2007 Mining and Sustainability Award for its efforts to ensure that mining leaves a very small footprint on the land, protecting water and wildlife in the Elkford, Fernie and Sparwood communities.

It is the only mine in British Columbia to operate its own greenhouse, where up to 50,000 conifer and deciduous seedlings are propagated annually from locally collected seeds and cuttings.

In the course of its 38 years of operation, Fording River Operations has also been presented with the annual British Columbia Jake McDonald Mine Reclamation Award three times, the Coal Mining Reclamation or Exploration Reclamation Citation 11 times, and the 2006 Citation for Coal Mine Reclamation.
2006 WINNER

The 2006 award was won by Polaris Minerals Corporation, which made great efforts to engage local communities and respect the traditional rights of local First Nations while developing Orca Quarry near Port McNeill. The company continues to follow these practices while developing Eagle Rock Quarry near Port Alberni.

2005 WINNER

Highland Valley Copper won the inaugural Mining and Sustainability Award for its commitment to responsible business practices, environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

Located close to Logan Lake near Kamloops, Highland Valley Copper is well known for its dedication to community engagement and worker safety.

It has been recognized several times by the British Columbia Technical and Research Committee on Reclamation for its reclamation achievements. The mine was also recognized by Ducks Unlimited for a contribution to the rehabilitation of the Logan Lake Marsh.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “MINING AND SUSTAINABILITY”

Mining and sustainability is defined as mining and mineral development that meets the growing needs of all communities while maintaining a healthy environment and vibrant economy for present and future generations.
1. **Health and Safety**: The applicant is acting to ensure the health and safety of workers and the community.

2. **Effective Engagement**: The relationships with those affected by an applicant’s project or operation are characterized by integrity and trust.

3. **Respect for Indigenous Peoples**: The applicant is respectful of Indigenous Peoples’ rights, culture and values.

4. **Environment**: The applicant is acting to ensure the maintenance and strengthening of environmental integrity over the long term within the project or operation’s region of influence.

5. **Full Mine or Operation Life Cycle**: The applicant is applying a full mine or operation life cycle perspective for planning and decision-making that spans exploration through post-closure.

6. **Resource-use Efficiency**: The applicant is seeking to minimize resource inputs energy, water, reagents, supplies, etc.—while also minimizing contaminant outputs to air, water and land.

7. **Continuous Learning and Adaptation**: The applicant recognizes the uncertainty inherent in mining operations and is committed to continuous learning.

8. **Benefits**: The applicant is enhancing the potential for creating economic, social, and cultural benefits for the local community or region.
For more information, please visit us on the web:
www.gov.bc.ca/empr

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