

The Britannia Centre For Mining Innovation Project

Project Information Sheet

“The Britannia Centre for Mining Innovation Project brings together business, education and research, community, government and local stakeholders in defining a vision for the future of Britannia that is based on the principles of sustainability.”

Introduction

Located along Howe Sound in the picturesque environs of Britannia Beach, British Columbia, the Britannia Centre for Mining Innovation is a project that envisions the development of a world-class interpretive experience that demonstrates to the world Canada’s commitment to sustainability. The project is being undertaken in a partnership between the Government of Canada and the Britannia Beach Historical Society (BBHS).

The Britannia mine, last operated in 1974, was in its day the largest producer of copper in the British Empire. Until recently, the mine was one of the biggest sources of metal pollution in North America. The site is now operated as a mining museum by the Britannia Beach Historical Society attracted more than 40, 000 people per year, and has been designated a National Historic Site.

Description

The project proposes two complementary components: a historical/tourism attraction and a mining innovation centre of excellence. The latter will focus on the technologies and practices of the future while the attraction will help to interpret the past in an exciting and engaging way. The innovation centre would be complimented by an initiative by the Centre for Environmental Research into Mining, Minerals and Materials (CERM3) at UBC to establish a dedicated environmental and mining research centre.

The intent is to develop a “world class” facility and attraction such that Britannia will become one of the top 5 tourism destinations in the Greater Vancouver area inviting some 500, 000 people per year. It is hoped that the new Britannia facilities could be in place by 2008.

Phase I

Phase I of the project, which was undertaken through the support of Natural Resources Canada, culminated in the production of a Conceptual Design Report in May 2003 which has formed the basis for proceeding to the next Phase of the Project. Phase I included a successful community and stakeholder engagement program that resulted in a multi-stakeholder community visioning design charrette, led by the UBC James Taylor Chair in Landscape and Liveable Environments, in October 2003 within the community of Britannia. Funding for the charrette came from NRCan, UBC, the BBHS, the Province of BC and the Macdonald Development Corporation. Outcomes from the design charrette can be viewed at the following web link: www.sustainable-communities.agsci.ubc.ca/britanniabeach/.

Phase II

This part of the project has just been initiated and will take place over the next 6 months. Phase II involves a more detailed design and concept development program, a detailed market feasibility analysis, a business planning exercise and further stakeholder consultation. Funding for Phase II will come from a combination of project sponsors including agencies of the Government of Canada such as Western Economic Diversification, Natural Resources Canada and Parks Canada, the BBHS and the mining industry.

Next Steps

Following Phase II, the next step in the project will be to address appropriate public and private sector funding sources to allow the project to proceed. There is currently no direct commitment by the Government of Canada or other project partners to fund additional stages in the project. However, the outcomes of Phase II will allow for more informed decision making on the part of all stakeholders and will therefore set the stage for future development opportunities. If additional funding becomes available, then a final design stage would begin in the fall of 2004 and actual work on the development of the facilities sometime in early 2005. The principal long term objective is to have the project up and running by early 2008.

Conclusions

The Britannia Innovation Centre Project represents an unparalleled opportunity to help transform a community that has been the source of significant environmental and social problems in the past into a model of sustainability and prosperity.

Proceeding with the interpretive centre and research facility would constitute a strategic investment in the Sea to Sky corridor and represents an opportunity to:

- Provide a major benefit to the people of the Britannia community, the Sea to Sky corridor, BC and Canada. The project would provide for a number of high quality jobs, significant economic stimulus for the region and could be a major catalyst in the re-development of this once orphaned community.
- Help offset the negative image now conveyed by the abandoned and deteriorating former mine site on a busy tourist route and reinforce the need to pursue sustainability as a guiding principle in all resource development initiatives.
- Contribute to the ongoing tourism potential of the Squamish region through investment in an existing designated National Historic Site to make it one of the top 5 destinations in the Greater Vancouver area, and
- Advance Canada's global leadership in the field by featuring the significant role Canada plays as a leader, investor and innovator in the international world of resource development, environmental stewardship, reclamation research, technical and social innovations and sustainable development

Based on its mining heritage, this vision represents one possible sustainable future for Britannia and has the potential to further brand Canada as a world leader in sustainable resource development and environmental stewardship.

Such an initiative will further help contribute to promoting a positive investment climate in BC and Canada and promote Canadian business and innovation to the world.

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