

**Richard Neufeld, Minister of Energy and Mines**  
**BC Mining Plan – Announcement**

Vancouver

January 18, 2005

Good afternoon and thank you all for showing up on this great, nice, rainy Vancouver day. A day that we were actually going to spend outside, at this beautiful park which used to be a quarry, right in the heart of Vancouver.

A lot of stone went out of here for different buildings and roads in Vancouver. It's indicative of what takes place in the mining industry. You can have a quarry during a certain period of time, and you can have a beautiful park, as we see here today, later on when it's reclaimed. That's something that the mining industry has always been very good at.

When our Premier talks to Minister of State Bell and myself about mining, he talks about sustainable mining. About mining that will stay in British Columbia, and mining that will continue to invest in British Columbia and create the private sector jobs that we all need.

Mining has come a long way in the last number of years in the province of British Columbia, and it's partly due to commodity prices. But commodity prices are worldwide. There was a time when commodity prices were also high during a different administration when the mining industry wasn't nearly as buoyant as it is today. So we're happy that we've been able to help this industry to be able to grow and start mining as a sunrise industry again, and to protect the environment.

Exploration investment forecasts for 2004 are between \$90 and \$120 million. That's more than triple what it was three years ago.

Gary Livingstone will know, when he was with MABC (Mining Association of BC) he used to tell me that we needed a minimum of \$150 to \$200 million a year in exploration dollars to be able to keep the mining industry moving forward and bringing on new mines, and we're well on our way.

We want to thank the industry for their interest, for their investment, for their confidence in the province of British Columbia, to start investing those dollars that we need to actually bring this industry back to what it used to be in the province of British Columbia.

Two hundred and twenty projects were underway in the year 2004, more than double the amount in 2003. In 2001 there was one mine seeking environmental approval; today there are 13. That's more than we've seen in the province of British Columbia since the eighties. I think that's good news, and that shows the interest that you folks have and the confidence that you folks have in the province of British Columbia.

The latest good news comes from Tumbler Ridge in the northeast, very close to where I live. The Western Canadian Coal Corporation of Vancouver plans to spend almost \$120 million to make the Wolverine coalmine operational by late this year. I'm happy to announce today that the mine has just been granted an environmental assessment certificate. This is absolutely good news for Tumbler Ridge, but it's also good news for the coal ports in B.C. Whether it's Prince Rupert or Port of Vancouver. That's good news for all of us. We see the resurgence of the coal industry in the province of British Columbia.

The Wolverine mine is ready to go. The environmental, First Nations, and economic considerations have all been addressed. We need more activity like this. Markets are expanding, and the demand for B.C. resources is expanding. We have a plan to ensure that we have an increased level of sustainable, responsible mining.

I'm pleased to be joined by Minister of State for Mining Pat Bell to announce this plan. I'll say a few more words, and then ask Pat to go through the BC Mining Plan. Then we'll take some questions.

B.C. has some of the best geology in the world, and mining is very important in our province. Mining has fuelled economic development in B.C. communities for over 150 years, and it has an incredible potential for the future.

Our taxes are competitive. We've made sure of that. Our Premier made sure of that immediately upon taking office. Our regulatory requirements have been streamlined. We removed a lot of regulatory requirements.

Our electricity rates are among the lowest in North America, and our workforce is highly skilled and our infrastructure is well developed.

We also have tremendous strengths in our communities. First Nations and local governments are partnering with mining firms, environmental organizations and

other groups. They are helping ensure this industry is not only profitable but socially and environmentally responsible and ultimately sustainable for the long term.

The Premier's vision for the future is a province working together and maximizing opportunities, taking its abundant resources, raw materials, communities' expertise and building a thriving economy and private sector. This economy will include thriving globally competitive exploration and mining sectors that are safe and environmentally responsible, benefiting all British Columbians.

The plan we are announcing today is going to help make that future happen. This plan is designed to increase investment and exploration in mining, increase jobs and increase economic benefits for the entire province while respecting the principle and lifestyle that make B.C. such a fine place to live, work and raise our families.

It's a new B.C. Mining Plan. It's a strong plan based on consultation with the exploration and mining industry, with communities and First Nations, and it is a comprehensive plan with key guiding principles, four cornerstones and over 50 action items to take us into the next decade.

This proactive approach will bring about many benefits in the future for British Columbia. There will be further increases in investment in B.C. and exploration in mining as we move forward. There will be more jobs, more revenues for communities and more revenues for important provincial services like health care and education. There will be improved relations between the mining industry, communities, First Nations, environmental organizations and other users of the land base.

The plan will help ensure the resurgence of this historic and vital industry continues in the long term, benefiting all British Columbians, helping to make sure B.C. remains a great place to live, raise a family and do business.

Now I'd like to hand it over to Minister of State Pat Bell to take forward the plan in its entirety.

Thank you very much.