

*Check Against Delivery*

**Honourable Bill Bennett  
Minister of State For Mining  
Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources  
Speech to Coaltrans Canada Conference  
Opening Remarks  
Four Seasons Hotel, Vancouver  
November 7, 2005**

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Thank you for the warm welcome.

I'm honoured to be here today among so many interesting people, it's great to see such a diverse crowd. I think it's a good sign for the mining industry in British Columbia that we have so many people from all over the world.

I bring greetings from Premier Gordon Campbell, who is a very sincere supporter of the coal industry here in B.C. He has been to many coal mines over the years, and I've been there with him on many occasions.

For those of you who are not from British Columbia, to give you a geographic orientation, we are bordered in the north by the Alaskan Panhandle and the Yukon and Northwest Territories; to our east is our ally and our competitor Alberta, to our south are the states Washington, Idaho and Montana; and to the west as far as the eye can see is the Pacific Ocean and all the opportunities that are there.

British Columbia is as big as France, Germany and the Netherlands combined.

Throughout the province we are blessed with abundance of natural resources like fish, minerals, hydroelectricity and timber, and of course, coal.

But we're not only strong in the resource sector.

We also have a booming high tech sector, an innovative film industry and a flourishing tourism industry as well as newer diversified industries such as eco-tourism, that add to our strong resource industries such as forestry, mining and oil and gas.

I'm the elected member of the legislative assembly for the riding of East Kootenay, in the southeast corner of our province, which is, incidentally, home to five working coal mines.

My riding was literally built by miners, and coal mining continues to pump a billion dollars a year into the B.C. economy.

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2800 people work directly for the coal industry in the Elk Valley and the average salary with benefits is an astonishing \$94,000!

These mining jobs support families and communities and that's why our government from 2001, has reached out to the mining industry and invited you back.

My riding in the beautiful Rocky Mountains is a crystal clear example of how mining and the environment can co-exist.

The Elk and Fording Rivers flow through the heart of coal country and if any of you here today are anglers, I'd invite you to come try some of the best westcoast cutthroat trout fishing in the world.

If you do get to fish our wonderful rivers in coal country, you're one big step ahead of me. I haven't had much time to fish since being sworn into cabinet this past June.

Premier Campbell appointed me as Minister responsible for mining, and it's a position I wanted, I sought and I'm really grateful to have.

I'm excited about being an advocate for the industry and for mining communities. People who know me will tell you that I have some experience at promoting coal.

I take some credit, along with my colleague Richard Neufeld, for making sure we included coal in B.C.'s provincial Energy Plan.

I've made it my job for the past five years to educate all of my colleagues in the government caucus about the value and potential of coal.

I'm looking forward to the generation of electricity from coal right here in B.C. The air emissions and burning technology is improving rapidly and since the public is not thrilled about damming up any more rivers or with the nuclear option at this time, coal is the future.

We have to find a way to become being energy self-sufficient in this province, we are a net importer of electricity, we should also be using electricity as an export to generate revenue for the province, and I believe that clean coal will play an important role.

My speech here today is entitled, "B.C. is Back!"

I could've said "Coal Mining is Back" because the coal industry is leading the way in rebuilding our mining industry here in B.C. following the very unfriendly 1990's.

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What's most important, though, is the progress we are making, and that's the message I would like to leave with you.

We've come a long way in a short time.

Mining today in B.C. is a \$5 billion industry.

Investment in mineral exploration was over \$130 million in 2004, four times the total for 2001.

We're hoping annual exploration investment will reach \$200 million this year.

There's been \$25 million spent in the NE this year so far, almost all of that on coal exploration.

Claims staking in B.C. so far this year is up 400% over last year.

Over 500 exploration projects are underway today, an increase of 60% since 2003.

Mining occurs on less than 0.03% of that our land base.

This is the most amazing thing about mining in British Columbia.

This \$5 billion industry generates really good jobs, communities that are sustained by the mining industry, and all that happens on .03% of our land base.

### **B.C. Coal Stats**

Let's talk coal for a moment, because B.C. has an incredible story to tell.

B.C. has about 25 billion tones of coal in this province that we know about.

Coal production has grown from 23 million tones in 2003 to over 27 million tones in 2004.

Last year, we produced over 40% of Canada's coal last year.

Now, here's the part we government types like the best.

In the 2000/01 fiscal year, the coal industry paid mineral taxes of \$18 million to government revenues.

We're forecasting, for this fiscal year, for more than \$116 million in government revenues! An increase of 550% since 2001!

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I thank you for that and on behalf of the healthcare and the education systems, we thank you for that too. Too many of our citizens use the generous public services provided in this province, without really knowing where the money comes from.

One of my jobs as the Minister responsible for mining is to make sure the public knows the important role mining plays in paying for public services. This is an important message to get out

### **Current operating coal mines**

There are 9 active coal mines in the province – 2 more will begin production in the near future.

Of course the big guy on the block is the Elk Valley Coal Partnership with 5 mines in southeast B.C: Greenhills, Fording River, Line Creek, Elkview and Coal Mtn. producing over 25 million tonnes in 2004.

Hillsborough Resources' at Quinsam Coal on Vancouver Island, a rare commodity in BC, an underground coal mine, produced almost 600,000 tonnes in 2004.

Compliance's Basin mine near Princeton, produced 40,000 tones in 2004.

Pine Valley Coal's Willow Creek mine started off in 2004 producing 900,000 tonnes per year and is trying to get up to 2.2 million tonnes per year.

Western Canadian's Dillon mine started in 2004 at 240,000 tonnes per year and increased to 80,000 tonnes per month in July of this year!

NEMI's Trend property is being developed and the company wants to begin production before the end of 2005.

Western Canadian's Wolverine mine has its Environmental Assessment Certificate and is expected to begin production in mid 2006.

There's lots' happening, with more to come.

### **First Nations & Mining**

I want to take a moment to talk about something that Premier Campbell has taken a lead role on in Canada

It's called the New Relationship with First Nations.

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We're forging a new, more practical relationship with First Nations people throughout the province and I believe it will benefit everyone.

Premier Campbell addressed this in his talk to the First Nations Summit just a few weeks ago.

He made it clear we all need to share in economic prosperity, in jobs and opportunities for everyone in the province. These words require actions and government is doing its part.

We have 300 agreements with First Nations that involve everything from forestry, oil and gas, parks, and mining.

B.C. is also negotiating treaties with First Nations. And we are making steady progress. Right now, we have five Agreements in Principles.

It's critical to the development of mining in BC that everyone shares in the benefits. Those who share in the benefits of mining, have a stake in the success of the mining industry.

I have a simple little thing I say every time I talk about First Nations and mining. It goes like this.

I believe that new mines should not go forward without First Nations involvement and without some kind of benefits to First Nations people.

On the other hand, there will be no benefits to First Nations people, or anyone else, unless new mines go forward.

I suggest that we should see the New Relationship not as an impediment to opening new mines, but as an opportunity.

An opportunity to build certainty and prosperity for First Nations, for industry and for all the people of British Columbia.

### **Government Initiatives for the Mining Sector**

Now it wouldn't be a speech from a politician, without a little bragging about how great we are!

The B.C. Mining Plan was announced in January 2005. For anyone who hasn't already seen the Mining Plan, it's a very good document. It encompassed a lot of work, it's grassroots exercise where our rural MLA's participated in the development and production. We released it late 2003.

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The Plan includes 14 broad strategies and over 50 actions to support the four cornerstones of a healthy, responsible industry.

One of our Mining Plan commitments was the appointment of a B.C. Coal Coordinator.

I am pleased to announce today the appointment of a person responsible for coal initiatives in British Columbia, Glen Wonders.

Glen will work with industry, First Nations and communities to facilitate the development of new coal projects.

Glen will also be working on other key initiatives including the facilitation of mineral exploration and mining in the areas of the province where we have been heavily impacted by the pine beetle.

Glen has most recently been the Regional Director of Mining and Minerals for the north central and northeast areas of the province.

He's has lived in the northern British Columbia communities of Fort Nelson, Dawson Creek and Prince George and has worked throughout the interior of British Columbia. He knows the province very well, and has lots of experience.

We are working on other important initiatives as well.

For example, we're trying to move DFO and Environment Canada towards British Columbia's model of a more time-sensitive and user-friendly environmental review process, based on what we have been told by the industry.

B.C. has done a decent job of changing the Environmental Assessment process to make it more accountable and timely, with a 180 day limit on it.

We know here in BC that we can be leaders in environmental stewardship while also sending out the message across the world that B.C. wants more investment in mining and we want the new jobs that come with more investment.

We work with some of the best reclamations specialists in the world, and I know that quite a few are here in the audience today.

Some of you will have heard about The Britannia Project. This inspired vision will transform the historic mining site of Britannia into an education and entertainment destination. Britannia Beach represents the ultimate opportunity where scientific research can be experienced by visitors in a real-life mine environment.

We all know that to operate on the land, especially in the wilderness situations where new mines often are located, the industry must earn its social license.

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You do this well, with your high environmental standards, your work safety standards, the taxes you pay to governments.

And by supporting projects like Britannia that allow us to show the world, on its way to Whistler for the 2010 Olympic Games, how the BC mining industry is using high tech and good science to operate in a way that respects our world today and tomorrow.

Thank you again for coming and listening.

I look forward to working with all of you to achieve one of our province's great goals of creating more jobs per capita than any other province in Canada. We are well on our way to doing that right now.

And we all know that mining – and coal mining specifically - will help us achieve that goal.

Please tell all your friends and colleagues to come and invest in BC.

And if you, or they, need any help, that's what I'm here for, you know where to find me.

Thank you.

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