
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2006AL0020-000725
June 5, 2006

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Ministry of Environment
Partnerships BC

BRITANNIA TREATMENT PLANT CLEANS UP THE ENVIRONMENT

BRITANNIA BEACH – A new water treatment plant at the historic Britannia Mine site is now fully functional, leaving the lasting legacy of a cleaner environment for generations to come, Minister of Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell, and Environment Minister Barry Penner announced today.

“For decades this old mine site has had the dubious distinction of being one of the worst polluters in all of North America, but this government and its partners have changed that,” said Bell. “One of the goals the Premier has challenged us with is to lead the world in sustainable environmental management. This project is a great example of how our province is taking innovative action to achieve that goal.”

Rainwater and runoff entering the old mine becomes contaminated as it passes through remaining mineral deposits. The resulting contamination, known as acid rock drainage, once flowed untreated into Howe Sound. Now, contaminated water is diverted to EPCOR’s new water treatment plant where heavy metals are removed from the water. The water is also treated to eliminate the acidity and discharged through a new outfall. The end result is a huge improvement to the marine environment in Howe Sound.

“When this mine went into operation more than 100 years ago, environmental standards were much different,” said Penner. “For 30 years, previous governments have talked about stopping acid rock drainage from flowing into Howe Sound, but it's our government that's actually done it. It's also timely that we are celebrating this official opening on World Environment Day at the start of Canadian Environment Week.”

Construction of the Britannia water treatment plant is the result of a public-private partnership between the Province and EPCOR. The partnership approach maximizes value, minimizes the cost and risk to taxpayers and raises the bar on accountability and innovation. For example, a micro-turbine driven by the flow of the mine’s water will generate the treatment plant’s power needs. The Province will save more than \$10 million dollars compared to completing the plant on its own.

“EPCOR is very proud to have worked with the government of B.C. on developing a solution to decades of environmental contamination in Howe Sound,” said EPCOR Water Services senior vice president Dr. Steve Stanley. “Working within a public-private partnership we’re able to draw upon the efficiencies of an outstanding team of expert partners, while minimizing risk to B.C. taxpayers. In working together, we’re bringing a cleaner future for the Britannia area.”

EPCOR provided upfront financing for the design and construction of the water treatment plant and will operate the facility for 20 years. The Province contributes an annual operation fee based on the amount of water processed in accordance with environmental regulations. Partnerships BC led the procurement process and contact negotiations on behalf of the Province.

“Partnerships BC is pleased to have been involved in such a successful partnership”, said Larry Blain, chief executive officer of Partnerships BC. “The project is expected to result in more than \$10 million in savings to B.C.’s taxpayers than if it had been delivered solely by the Province, demonstrating that the partnership approach works well for smaller scale projects.”

“In addition to the environmental benefits, cleaning up this historic site is opening new social and economic opportunities for the community of Britannia Beach,” added Bell.

Since August 2001, the Province has committed \$116.5 million to identify, clean up and return to productive use a number of B.C.’s Crown contaminated sites. The Province has earmarked an additional \$47.2 million for work in 2007-2009.

Canadian Environment Week is held during the first week of June to coincide with World Environment Day (June 5). June 4-10 marks the 35th celebration of Canadian Environment Week. The goal is to raise public awareness of the environment and of the benefits linked to its protection.

For more information about the history of Britannia Mine visit www.britanniamine.ca

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact:	Jeremy Berry Media Relations Officer Ministry of Agriculture and Lands 250 356-8950 250 889-2285 (cell)	Jay Shukin EPCOR 780 412-8877 780 720-4378 (cell)
----------------	---	--

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province’s news feeds using RSS, visit the Province’s website at www.gov.bc.ca.