

BACKGROUNDER on: The International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII)

What is the International Minerals Innovation Institute?

IMII is an organization jointly funded by industry and government that will ensure the minerals industry has access to the skilled workforce and new technology it needs.

It will do this by designing some of the education and training (E&T) programs and research and development (R&D) projects to meet the needs of the mining and minerals industry. IMII, with a board of directors made up primarily of industry representatives, will develop and contract the delivery of programs and projects necessary to meet industry's needs.

IMII will have an office with four people that will facilitate panels made up of industry and institutional members. The objective will be to identify needs for new or modified E&T programs and R&D projects, devise programs or projects that will address the needs, and work with potential delivery agents (education or research institutions) to find the most appropriate way to deliver the programs and projects the panels have identified. The board will decide which programs and projects will be funded resulting in the programs and projects the industry requires.

Whose idea was this?

The idea was conceived by a group of industry, educational, and government representatives - people that saw the rapid growth happening in the province's minerals sector and the need for a more coordinated, focused, and timely approach to education, training, research and development for the sector. This group of concerned citizens coalesced into a steering committee, and with the help of funds from Innovation Saskatchewan and Western Economic Diversification, contracted a \$50,000 feasibility study and an \$85,000 business plan, that helped flesh out ideas. The steering committee was co-chaired by Engin Ozberk, Cameco's Vice-President of Technology and Innovation and Karen Chad, the University of Saskatchewan's Vice-President of Research. Its meetings and projects were managed by David Grier, Senior Strategist at Innovation Saskatchewan. Other participants were from the Saskatchewan Mining Association, Hatch Engineering, Energy and Resources, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, Western Economic Diversification, and Natural Resources Canada.

Is IMII operational and, if not, when will it be?

Based on the positive response of a number of major mining companies operating in the province,, and encouragement from Innovation Saskatchewan, the steering committee decided to proceed to formalize the organization. IMII was incorporated under the non-profit corporations act on January 27, 2012, with three founding members/directors – the steering committee co-chairs (Engin Ozberk and Karen Chad) and Innovation Saskatchewan's chief executive officer Jerome Konecsni. In February, Innovation Saskatchewan's board provided a \$500,000 grant from its Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund to help address startup costs..

The board has appointed former Lieutenant Governor Gordon Barnhart to be the interim board chair and to assist in the development of an appropriate governance structure and David Grier to serve as acting executive director.

Aren't there other institutes like this in Canada? Is duplicating them a good use of money?

There are other institutes serving Canada's mining and minerals sector in Ontario and Quebec. However, none of these have included industry-driven education and training program development and none conduct research to address Saskatchewan's key minerals of potash and uranium. Saskatchewan has world class reserves of these two minerals, as well as coal, gold, clay, and diamonds; all with their unique challenges based on the geology in which they are contained. Mining was identified as one of the three core engines driving the provincial economy in an jurisdictional advantage assessment undertaken by Innovation Saskatchewan.. Saskatchewan has some education and training programs and research and development projects addressing the mining and minerals sector, but does not have an institute that focuses on delivering a coordinated set of solutions to serve the industry. Given the importance of the sector to the province and the uniqueness of our minerals and geology, it is long overdue.