



# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN FORT ST. JAMES**

## **2011 OVERVIEW**

Winter/Spring 2012

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# Background

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This Economic Development Report has been developed to act as a tool for assessing current positioning of economic development in Fort St. James as well as to serve as a tool for exploring projected trends in Economic Development. This report looks at four sectors within the Fort St. James Economy: Industry/Employment, Housing, Tourism and Education.

The majority of the information presented in this report has been collected through the 2006 Canada Census, through information tracked in the municipal office as well as through contacting a variety of local organizations which track their own indicators of organizational growth. Groups contacted include the College of New Caledonia, the Fort St. James Visitor Information Centre, the Fort St. James National Historic Site, BC Assessment, the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines, Fort Outreach Employment Centre, and local educational institutions.

## Summary

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The findings presented in this report suggest modest growth in all areas as compared to 2008/2009 statistics. While in some cases numbers have surpassed previous levels, other areas remain consistent. The following is a summary of some of the most striking findings included in this research:

- The level of household income in Fort St. James was \$67,671 in 2005, higher than the estimated provincial average of \$52,709 per household for the same year.
- The 2011 Census' preliminary statistics on population show Fort St. James as the second-fastest growing community in all of British Columbia, with a growth rate of 25%.
- Projected industrial developments anticipate a potential population increase of 47% for Fort St. James by 2014.
- Property valuation is reflecting an influx in anticipated population base, with a 16.66% increase in residential property values between 2011 and 2012, compared to a 2.36% increase in property values for the Prince George region as a whole.
- In 2011 there were a total of 19 construction permits approved and 14 new residences built, compared to 14 permits and 2 residences built in 2010.
- Commercial property values rose 19% between 2011 and 2012, in part due to investments made through the District/ Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Revitalization Project which included upgrades to building facades, signage, shrubs and trees in the downtown core.

- Both 2010 and 2011 saw industrial property taxes increase by only 2.5% (each year). In 2011 the municipal mill rate for industrial properties was \$55.112 for every \$1000 assessed value.
- The District of Fort St. James has adopted an Industrial Revitalization Tax Exemption policy that limits increases in property taxes for Heavy Industrial properties where eligible improvements have been made.
- In 2010 there were 10 active mineral surveying corporations operating within a 250 km radius of Fort St. James and 18 in the Omineca Region.
- Between 2010 and 2011 the number of new clients at the local Fort St. James employment service agency jumped 18.5%, representing a 4 year high in case files. They directly found employment for 152 clients, an increase of 30%, and posted 15% more job opportunities than the year previous.
- In 2011 there were 419 business licenses registered with the District of Fort St. James, up 8% from 2010. A total of 44 new businesses took on registration, nearly doubling the number of new licensees from 2010. New businesses licenses made up 11% of all businesses registered in 2011.
- The Parks Canada operated Fort St. James National Historic Site recorded 12,204 visitors in 2011. This offers an increase of 888 visitors ( 7.8%) over 2010. This increase is attributed to school student visits and increased community visitation, showing greater local and regional engagement with the site as well as regional and outside marketing.
- In 2011 there were 134 full time students at the College of New Caledonia Fort St. James satellite location. The mine industry certificate course being offered for the first time in 2010/2011 ran at full capacity and saw 90% employment for graduates.

## Industry & Employment

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### Population

The 2006 Census provides the most expansive demographic information on Fort St. James' population at the time of this report's release. The population of Fort St. James in 2006 was 1355, a decline of 6.8% from 2001. Trends and projections in industrial development suggest that this number will increase by 2014 by 335 new residents or 20% using a formula of  $[(x/2) 2.5 + (x/2)]$ , where x is the number of anticipated new residents to move to town as a result of new industrial development and labour opportunities. To derive this estimate it is assumed that 50% of operational employees for the Mt. Milligan Mine will choose to live in Fort St. James.

The 2011 Census’ preliminary statistics on population show Fort St. James as the second-fastest growing community in all of British Columbia, with a growth rate of 25%. From 2006 to 2011 the recorded population grew from 1355 to 1691. The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Area C, which borders Fort St. James saw an increase in population of 5.5% from 2006 to 2011, increasing from 1355 to 1429.

**Household Income**

The level of household income in Fort St. James was \$67,671 in 2005, 28% higher than the provincial average of \$52,709 per household for the same year. Projections anticipate average household income to rise with the opening of the Mt. Milligan Mine in 2013 and Fort Green Energy in 2014.

**Industrial Taxation**

In 2011 the municipal mill rate for industrial properties was \$55.112 for every \$1000 assessed value. Both 2011 and 2010 saw industrial property taxes increase by only 2.5% per year. In 2009 the industrial property tax was increased by only 2% and in 2008 and 2007 it was not increased at all.

The District of Fort St. James has adopted an Industrial Revitalization Tax Exemption policy that limits increases in property taxes for Heavy Industrial properties where eligible improvements have been made. Exemptions are based on a percentage of the assessed value of the new improvements and are in effect for five years following the construction.

**Workforce Distribution**

Data collected from the 2006 Census indicates a wide range of employment in primary industry and processing which is commonly viewed as a leading employer of residents in Fort St. James. It should be taken into consideration when looking at the employment sector distribution in Figure 1 (below), that the roles of people in finance and administration departments, trades, transport, and equipment operators, processing, and manufacturing are often intrinsically linked to primary industry and resource extraction.

To illustrate this we can look at the employment numbers of the major sawmill operators in the District: Conifex (then Pope & Talbot), Stuart Lake Logging, Apollo Forest Products, K&D Logging, T’loh Forest Products and Northern Interior Forest Products. Combined, the 6 operators employed 466 people in 2005, or 61% of the local workforce. This dependence on forestry as a primary economic driver for Fort St. James was demonstrated in 2008 with the closure of two mills at that time: Stuart Lake Lumber and Pope & Talbot Ltd. It is estimated that as a result of the two mill closures and slow-down in the industry, an estimated 485 local residents from Fort St. James and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area “C” found themselves unemployed. At that time some chose to leave town, while most others chose to stay rooted in the community (*Smith, Mark*). In 2008 Pope & Talbot was purchased by Conifex and re-opened to hire back the 220 hourly employees previously employed at Pope & Talbot from the District and the Regional District. The anticipated diversification of local industry and employment sectors through the addition of the Mt. Milligan Mine will help to insulate Fort St. James against economic hard times and shifts in employment.

**Figure 1) Workforce Distribution 2005**

Sectors of Employment	Number Employed	Percentage of Total Workforce
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Sales & Service	165	21.6%
Trades, Transport & Equipment Operations	160	20.9
Social Sciences, Govt. Services, Religion, Education	85	11.1
Business, Finance & Admin	80	10.5
Processing, Manufacturing & Utilities	75	9.8
Natural & Applied Sciences & Related	70	9.2
Primary Industries	50	6.5
Health	45	5.9
Management	35	4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Statistics Canada 2006)

## Projected Industrial Developments:

Figure 2) Projected Industrial Developments 2012 - 2014

Project	Estimated Timelines	Estimated Employment	Additional Notes
<b>Fort Green Energy</b>	<p><b>Permitting and Environmental Assessments:</b> 2011/2012</p> <p><b>Construction:</b> Anticipated ground-breaking May 2012, Construction 2012 – 2014</p> <p><b>Commercial Operations:</b> April 2014</p> <p>30 year contract with BC Hydro</p>	<p><b>Construction:</b> 80 workers, no plans for a construction camp, preference is to hire locally, house or accommodate construction workers in FSJ</p> <p><b>Operations:</b> 16 well-paid highly skilled positions (engineers)</p>	<p>Financing is secured: - 20% investment by Dalkia - 80% investment by Fengate (10% offer to First Nations)</p> <p>Sister project in Merrit BC</p> <p><b>Construction Costs:</b> \$140+ Mil</p>
<b>Mt. Milligan Mine/ Thompson Creek Metals Co.</b>	<p><b>Construction:</b> 2010 – 2013, Estimated spending in 2010 on construction was \$33Mil. Of a total estimates \$915 Mil.</p> <p><b>Commercial Operations:</b> 2013</p> <p>Estimated 22-year Mine Life @ 110,000 tonne per day</p>	<p>Construction: 650 people, worker camp on mine-site</p> <p>Operations: 350 people</p>	<p>Mining Course being taught at CNC</p> <p>Estimated that 200 – 500 people will be moving to town in 2013</p>

	produced and 60,000 tonne per day processed		
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**Forestry Sector**

The Ministry of Forests and Range report in 2011, 21,714 loads of timber being shipped to local sawmills in Fort St. James. On average each load contains 50 m3 of wood, indicating about 1,085,700 m3 of wood being shipped through licensees Apollo Forest Products, Northern Interior Forest Products (KDL), Conifex Inc. and Stuart Lake Lumber.

According to the Ministry of Forest and Range’s Apportionment and Commitments for the Prince George Timber Supply Area, the total annual allowable cut for local licensees as part of the Prince George Timber Supply Area is 1,577,116 m3, (856,746 m3 is permitted annually to local licensees for replaceable forest licenses, 510,000 m3 is permitted annually for non-replaceable local licenses and 210,370 m3 is licensed to local First Nations licensees). The total annual allowable cut for the Prince George Timber Supply Area is roughly 2,300,000 m3. While this report cites the amounts permitted to be cut annually, this does not mean that these levels are fully harvested. Additionally, wood is harvested by and purchased from BC Timber Sales which contributes to the fibre supply used by local sawmill operations.

It is also noteworthy that Conifex Inc. invested in \$30 Million upgrade to the sawmill planer in 2011 in addition to being awarded the “New Exporter of the Year Award” as part of the British Columbia Exporter Awards given out annually in Vancouver.



**Mineral Surveying**

We can explore the number of geological surveys that are being done in the Omenica region nearby to the District of Fort St. James as a means of tracking economic development. While exploration is an

indication of corporate and Provincial interest in developing the mining sector, it also provides an economic return for the regions in which exploration is taking place, with accommodations, transportation, products and services as consumables that surveyors will use in communities close to where exploration is occurring, thus supporting the local economy.

According to *Exploration and Mining 2010* about 83 000 m of exploration drilling was conducted in 2010 in the Omenica Region, spread between 18 projects. While data from 2009 is limited due to changes in the defined boundaries of the Omenica Region, the apparent activity level has increased since 2009. In 2010 Xstrata Copper Canada Ltd. and Teck Resources were extensively drilling for porphyry copper-gold deposits between Mt. Milligan and Prince George, as were Cayden Resources Inc, Orestone Mining Corp, and Yankee Hat Minerals Ltd. First Point Minerals Corp and Cliffs Natural Resources Inc explored terrane ultramafic rocks northwest of Fort St. James for a new style of nickel deposit.

Meanwhile Serengeti Resources Inc has been busy 140 km Northwest of Fort St. James drilling on the Kwanika copper-gold property. In a step forward on the project, Serengeti signed an exploration access agreement with Takla Lake First Nation. Nearby Teck Resources generated new exploration targets and earned majority ownership of the Lorraine copper-gold prospect 130 km Northwest of Fort St. James. Oceanside Capital Corp conducted exploration on the Indata property at a nearby proximity to Fort St. James, west of the Pinci fault.

**Figure 3) Geological Surveys and Mineral Exploration Within a 250 km Radius of Fort St. James**

Exploration Co.	Claim	Minerals	Geographic Location	Number of holes/ distance in 2010
Orestone Mining Corp	Captain	Cu, Au	30 km south of Mt. Milligan	Generating exploration targets
Silver Quest Resources Ltd	Chuchi North		50 km northwest of Mt. Milligan	
Yankee Hat Minerals Ltd.	Fran	Cu, Au	25 km southwest of Mt. Milligan	Generating exploration targets, Previous exploration of 71 holes
Oceanside Capital Corp	Indata	Au, quartz	130 km northwest of Fort St. James (west of Pinchi fault)/ 25 km southeast of Mt. Milligan	5000 m drill program planned for 2011.
Serengeti Resources Inc	Kwanika	Cu, Au	140 km northwest of Fort St. James	31 holes/ 7600m
Teck Resources Limited	Lorraine	Cu, Au	130 km northwest of Fort St. James	Generating exploration targets
Thompson Creek Metals Co.	Mt Milligan	Cu, Au	95 km from Fort St. James	Construction is ongoing
Terracad	Mt Milligan North			Generating



Geological Services				exploration targets
Xtrata Copper Canada Ltd.	Prince George Porphyry	Cu, Au	12 claim blocks between Prince George and Fort St. James	Generating exploration targets
Cayden Resources Inc	Wildcat	Cu, Au	12 km southwest of Mt. Milligan	12 holes/ 2200 m (planned for 2011)

*(Exploration and Mining 2010)*

## **Business Start-up**

The District of Fort St. James maintains a database of municipal business licenses. It is mandated by a municipal bylaw that all businesses operating in the District boundaries must register with a municipal business license. Business licenses can be purchased seasonally and range from \$50 - \$200.

In 2011 there were 419 business licenses registered with the District of Fort St. James, up 8% from 2010. A total of 44 new businesses took on registration, nearly doubling the number of new licenses in 2010. New businesses licenses made up 11% of all businesses registered in 2011. In 2011, 12% of businesses did not renew their licenses from 2010 to 2011, either due to choice or closing of the business.

## **Employment Services**

Fort Outreach Employment Services is a provincially funded employment agency which operates in Fort St. James.

Between 2010 and 2011 the number of new case files at Fort Outreach increased from 183 files to 217. Each case file represents a client seeking employment. This jump of 34 new cases represents an increase of 18.5% and a 4 year high in case files.

In 2011 Fort Outreach directly found employment for 152 clients (compared to 117 in 2010 – an increase of 30%). They posted 497 job listings (up 15% from 2010) and had an average number of walk-in traffic to their office, recording 3274 visits.

As described by Fort Outreach Employment Services, there are roughly 20 case files which are carried over from any given year, with the remaining files finding employment or starting personal businesses, either through their own pursuits or directly through Fort Outreach. Fort Outreach attributes their increase in new clients in 2011 to prospective workers coming to Fort St. James with the intention of applying for vacancies with the Mt. Milligan Mine and local sawmills as a labour vacuum is created in the local workforce.

# Construction and Property Values:

## Construction

Construction in Fort St. James is an indicator of economic development in that it allows us perspective on capital investments being made in our area in regard to industry, business and private residences. The District of Fort St. James offers permitting for major construction developments within municipal boundaries. Permits are issued by a building inspector who maintains records on value and type of permits approved.

In 2011 the District saw \$3,391,267 in permitted construction. This is down \$131,733 or 3.8% from 2010 numbers, however is still keeping in line with a 5 year high in construction levels, as can be seen in the chart below.

In 2011 construction permits were focused 68% on private residential, 20% on commercial, 7% industrial, 3% on public infrastructure and less than 3% on educational and demolitions. There were a total of 19 permits approved and 14 new residences built.

In 2010 construction permitting was directed at 55% towards public infrastructure (municipal), 30% to industrial upgrades, 4% to commercial upgrades and 11% private residential. There were a total of 14 permits approved and 2 new residential dwellings built.

Three construction projects of significance which took place between 2010 and 2011 which did not require permitting are the \$1.2 Million Downtown Revitalization Project, the start of construction on the \$12 Mil Nak’alun Elementary School, and the \$30 Million planer upgrade at Conifex Inc.

**Figure 4) Construction Permit Summary for Fort St. James, 2006 – 2011**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Value</u>	<u>Number of Permits</u>	<u>High-value Construction Projects</u>
<b>2006</b>	<b>1,554,617</b>	Total: 21	\$448,517 MOF Reno Apollo mill addition \$303,900
		New residential builds: 3	
<b>2007</b>	<b>2,154,000</b>	Total: 31	Apollo Mobile Shop \$1,400,000
		New residential builds: 3	
<b>2008</b>	<b>1,428,000</b>	Total:12	CNC = \$1,000,000 interior renovations
		New residential builds: 1	
<b>2009</b>	<b>244,000</b>	Total: 12	
		New residential builds:2	
<b>2010</b>	<b>3,523,000</b>	Total:14	\$1,900,000 Fort Forum Arena 870,000 Conifex
		New residential builds: 2	
<b>2011</b>	<b>3,391,267</b>	Total: 19	

		New residential builds: 5 (14 units total)	
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Construction in the Regional District Electoral Area C also gives an indication of economic development in Fort St. James, as many area residents are locally employed. In 2011 Electoral Area C \$950,150 of construction was permitted, (compared to \$504,140 in 2010). There were 19 permits, of which 8 were new residences or modular homes. In 2010 there were a total of 8 permits for Area C, 4 of which were new residences.

### Property Values

BC Assessment determines ownership and tax liability, classifies and values each property in British Columbia. To meet its goal, BC Assessment completes an Assessment Roll every December 31. The Assessment Roll is used by tax jurisdictions to form the basis of their Tax Rolls. Tax jurisdictions set tax rates for each of the nine property classes.

As measured by BC Assessment, overall property values in Fort St. James increased in 2011 from \$144 Million in 2011 to \$161 Million in 2012. While some of this change can be attributed to the subdivisions, rezoning and new construction seen within the district, it also reflects changes in market values.

Businesses saw the highest increase in values at 19.09% while residential properties saw an overall increase of 16.66% for single family units. This increase of nearly 17% for residential properties is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in British Columbia and can be compared to the Prince George regional average of 2.36% increase. Light industry saw an increase of 3.58% and major industry increase of 1.41% in value in 2011.

The increase of 19% in business values can be attributed in part to the terrific work of the Downtown Revitalization Project which took place in 2009/2010 as a partnership between the District of Fort St. James and the Fort St. James Chamber of Commerce. This project saw upgrades to the facades of nearly all downtown businesses as well as a number of innovations made in the communication tools, promotions and walkability of the downtown core. The regional average for the Prince George region’s business properties was an increase of 6%.



## Real Estate Availability

As of January 2012 there were three of the four real estate service providers who were willing to share information on housing availability and cost. Amongst the three service providers there were a total of 32 residential units available for sale, with costs ranging from \$95,000 to \$629,000. There were 10 commercial properties listed for sale and they ranged between \$40,000 to \$1,390,000.

# Tourism:

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## Fort St. James Visitor Information Centre: Visitor Statistics and Profile

The Chamber of Commerce in Fort St. James is contracted by the municipality to operate a Visitor Information Centre. The operators track attendance statistics and visitor inquiries to the site on a monthly and annual basis.

In July and August of 2011 there were recorded 1213 visitors to the Visitor Information Centre, down 23% from 2010 during the same months the previous year. While this number was up from 2008, it still represents a 3 year low. In 2010 the Visitor Information Centre saw an increase of 165 attendees, up 12% from 2009.

A documented drop in local usage can possibly offer suggestion as to where the drop originates from, though the reasons why the Visitor Information Centre is being accessed less frequently by locals is difficult to determine based on the data collected. In 2011 local visitors to the Visitor Information Centre made up 11% of respondents to the Visitor Information Centre survey. In 2010 local visitors made up 30% of this demographic.

Of those who completed the visitor information survey in 2011, the percentage of visitors from Europe surpassed those visiting locally and from other areas of BC. On average in attendance during July/August of 2011, 10% of all visitors were from elsewhere in BC, 11% were local, while European visitors comprised 26% of visitations. The remainder of visitors was comprised of Canadians from other provinces (principally Alberta), Americans (principally from California and Washington) and Asians.

As recorded by the Fort St. James Visitor Information Centre, in 2011 (of those who participated in the research), 76% of all visitors came to Fort St. James for a one-day visit. This suggests a strong market of day-trippers from surrounding communities (e.g. Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, Prince George), and also of tourist markets who plan to spend a number of days in the Region while making Fort St. James a one-day stop in their journeys. Those who stayed for a one night visit were significantly lower in numbers at a visitation rate of 8%, and those who stayed for two, three, or more nights were even less frequent.



### **Fort St. James National Historic Site**

The Parks Canada operated Fort St. James National Historic Site recorded 12,204 visitors in 2011. This offers an increase of 888 visitors, 7.8% over 2010. This increase is attributed to school student visits and increased community visitation, showing greater local and regional engagement with the site.

Postal code research conducted by the National Historic Site in 2011 found that of 2228 visitors who participated in the research, 53% of all visitors were Canadian, with 80% of those visitors coming from within BC and 40% coming from less than 100km away. 31% of respondents came from European locations, with the strongest contingency travelling from Germany and Switzerland.

## **Education:**

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Fort St. James is home to three Elementary Schools, a High School, and a satellite campus for the College of New Caledonia. David Hoy Elementary School, Sowchea Elementary School and Fort St. James Secondary School all are operated by British Columbia School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes). Nak'albun Elementary School, is an independent school operated by the Nak'azdli First Nation Band.

### **Sowchea Elementary School:**

Enrollment at Sowchea Elementary School for 2011 was consistent with that of 2010 with 125 full time students from K – 7 and 10 preschool enrollments. Another 12 students are expected to enroll in the Kindergarten class for 2012/13. Registration for Sowchea Elementary School for the 2012/13 academic year begins March 19, 2012.

### **Nak'albun Elementary School:**

Enrollment at Nak'albun Elementary School for 2011 was 95 full time students, up 13 students compared to 2010. An additional class was added in 2011 to accommodate full-grade classes from Kindergarten to Grade 5, with a split grade class being offered for grades 6 and 7. Classroom staff to student ratio remained quite low at 1:5; 1 classroom staff person for every 5 students. Nak'albun

Elementary School is open to all community members who have an interest in learning BC Curriculum with an emphasis on Carrier and First Nations culture. In 2011 Nak'abun began construction of a new school facility with the pouring of foundations and installation of a geothermal heating system. The new school is anticipated to be accessible as of September 2013 academic year and will be complete December 2013. Estimated costs for the construction project are roughly \$12 Million. Based on the preschool enrollment for 2011/12, Nak'abun Elementary is expecting 15 new students to move into the September 2012 Kindergarten program.

### **David Hoy Elementary School:**

Enrollment at David Hoy Elementary School was down 26 students in 2011 compared to 2010, with a total of 214 students registered for the 2011/12 academic year. David Hoy Elementary employs 34 staff people, of which 14 are teachers and 12 are classroom support workers. Classroom staff to student ratio is low, at 1:8 with 1 classroom staff person for every 8 students. Registration at David Hoy Elementary for the 2012/13 academic year begins March 19, 2012.

### **Fort St. James Secondary School:**

The Fort St. James Secondary School employed 51 people in 2011, 40 of which were teachers and support staff. With an enrollment of 333 students for the 2011/12 academic year, FSJSS offered a 1:8 student ratio. Enrollment was down in 2011 from 360 to 333, a drop of less than 7.5%.

### **College of New Caledonia:**

The College of New Caledonia operates a satellite campus in Fort St. James. In 2011 there were 134 full time students, down 9 students from 2010. The Fort St. James campus saw an increase in First Nations students, from 68 in 2010 to 79 in 2011. Course offerings increased in the Fort St. James/Vanderhoof/Fraser Lake campuses from 270 to 393 courses and total course enrollments increased from 2878 to 3654. Of the total number of enrollments between the Fort St. James, Vanderhoof and Fraser Lake campuses, Fort St. James makes up approximately 65 – 70%.

The Fort St. James campus operates out of a newly renovated building, the result of a \$1.4 million renovation project in 2008. The campus offers many post-secondary trades and vocational programs, as well as continuing education courses that target workplace skills enhancement. Video conferencing is offered as a tool at the college, and the computer lab has recently received a total upgrade sponsored by Mt. Milligan Mine. Mt. Milligan/ Thompson Creek Metals has been pro-active in its partnership with the Fort St. James campus to offer opportunities for training in the mining sector to assist in building up a local labour force that will be able to compete for employment with mining operations. This mine industry certificate course ran at full capacity in 2010/2011 and saw 90% employment to graduates from its first year of being offered. Exploration companies First Point Minerals Corp., Serengeti Resources Inc, Xtrata Copper Canada Ltd., Thompson Creek Metals Co., have all booked employees for training in this course. A Mine Processing Certificate program is being developed and will see a September 2012 start.

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