
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth

Supporting tech companies to boost B.C. critical minerals sector New mining and critical minerals testbed launched

RICHMOND –

Summary

- *Through its Look West strategy, B.C. is launching a new provincewide mining and critical minerals testbed, the sixth to launch in the Integrated Marketplace program*
- *The testbed will allow B.C. companies to test their innovative solutions that help speed up permitting, groundbreaking, support mine operations or help strengthen supply chain and processing*
- *The first project through the testbed is a partnership between EMP Metals and Saltworks Technologies, with a goal to turn high-quality lithium brines into battery-grade chemicals*

As part of the implementation of the Look West economic strategy, B.C. businesses now have new opportunities to test, deploy and scale cutting-edge technology that can support the continued growth of B.C.'s mining and critical minerals sector.

“By putting innovative tools in the hands of B.C. companies, this new mining and critical minerals testbed will fast-track permitting, strengthen supply chains, and develop cutting-edge solutions, creating good-paying jobs for British Columbians, and building a stronger economy here at home,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs and Economic Growth. “This is our Look West plan in action.”

The first project through the new testbed will see a partnership between North Vancouver’s EMP Metals and Richmond-based Saltworks Technologies. These companies will work on a demonstration plant that will turn Saskatchewan’s high-quality lithium brines into battery-grade chemicals. This technology will boost B.C.’s capacity to produce battery-grade lithium, while supporting high-value, innovative employment in the province, resulting in approximately 18 new jobs and 24 sustained positions.

“British Columbia is home to world-leading critical mineral technology firms,” said Ben Sparrow, CEO, Saltworks Technologies. “Support from BCIM through the mining and critical minerals testbed is instrumental to grow this sector and accelerate global commercialization of technology developed in British Columbia. This project will generate real-world performance data and strengthen Canada’s critical minerals value chain, while anchoring high-value engineering, manufacturing, and clean technology jobs in B.C.”

Support for mining and critical minerals

Through the Integrated Marketplace, delivered by Innovate BC, B.C. businesses have access to a new provincewide mining and critical minerals testbed, which links technology providers with potential industrial buyers. Projects at the testbed will focus on:

- AI and software-enabled productivity solutions
- power supply and alternative energy solutions to power mines
- low-emission vehicles and fleet management
- traceability in supply chains through digital credentialling
- mineral processing focused on innovation in waste streams, reduced chemical consumption and value-added processing

“B.C. has everything it needs to succeed on the global stage, including the technology to process valuable critical minerals like lithium, aluminum and zinc” said Jagrup Brar, Minister of Mining and Critical Minerals. “Through the newest testbed in the Integrated Marketplace, we’re supporting innovative B.C. businesses to help strengthen our Canadian mining industry and the communities that rely on them, while boosting our province’s ability to access and process the critical minerals needed to drive innovation forward.”

Helping companies boost Canada’s critical minerals supply

The new mining and critical minerals testbed is open to companies located anywhere in the province. The testbed is designed to accelerate the development, validation and deployment of cutting-edge technologies in the mining and critical minerals sectors.

The testbed offers companies the opportunity to demonstrate that products can comply with regulatory requirements which can:

- help improve permitting and groundbreaking
- support operations of B.C. mines
- strengthen supply chains and mineral processing

Part of the Look West strategy

Created by the Government of B.C. in partnership with PacifiCan in 2023, the Integrated Marketplace is delivered by Innovate BC and helps B.C. companies test, deploy and scale their innovations while de-risking technology adoption for partnering industry customers.

This work supports the Province’s Look West strategy for jobs and industry, which outlines B.C.’s vision to deliver jobs and opportunities by strengthening the workforce to develop a more independent economy.

It includes delivering major projects quicker, diversifying markets and growing targeted sectors, such as technology, aerospace, marine, AI and quantum, life sciences, agriculture construction innovation, mining and critical minerals.

Quotes:

Gregor Robertson, federal Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for PacifiCan –

“B.C. has the resources the world is looking for and the skilled talent the world needs. Today’s

announcement is an important investment in B.C.'s critical minerals sector – supporting innovation, clean economic growth, and resilient communities. PacifiCan is committed to ensuring that B.C. businesses have the resources they need to grow and contribute to one strong Canadian economy.”

Karl Kottmeier, CEO, EMP Metals –

“Support from Innovate BC’s Integrated Marketplace program provides significant validation and financial assistance as EMP Metals accelerates the development of our lithium brine resource. This grant strengthens EMP Metals’ ability to advance a made-in-Canada solution that is unlocking the potential of our lithium brine resources. Our partnership with Saltworks Technologies and our Project Aurora is moving our Saskatchewan lithium project to commercial readiness, and ultimately enhancing domestic critical-minerals capacity, reducing environmental impacts, and helping position Canada as a leader in the clean-energy supply chain.”

Peter Cowan, president and CEO, Innovate BC –

“British Columbia is home to some of the most advanced mining and critical minerals technologies in the world, and that innovation is a powerful asset for our economy. This new Integrated Marketplace testbed will help local companies move from promising solutions to real-world application by creating a lower-risk pathway for new technologies to be adopted by key industry customers looking to evolve their operations and capabilities. At the same time, it strengthens a foundational sector for our province, supporting safer, more efficient and more sustainable mining operations.”

Quick Facts:

- B.C.’s investment in the Integrated Marketplace includes as much as \$41.5 million from the Ministry of Jobs and Economic Growth, and \$11.7 million from the Government of Canada through PacifiCan.
- There are currently six testbeds in B.C.
- This supports industries to lower emissions and increase productivity, while growing the economy and creating jobs.

Learn More:

- To learn about Saltworks Technologies, visit: <https://www.saltworkstech.com/>
- To learn about EMP Metals, visit: <https://empmetals.com/>
- To learn about the Integrated Marketplace, visit: <https://www.innovatebc.ca/programs/integrated-marketplace>
- For more information about Innovate BC, visit: <https://www.innovatebc.ca/>
- To learn more about Look West: Jobs and Prosperity for a Stronger BC and Canada, visit: <https://gov.bc.ca/LookWest>
- To learn more about PacifiCan, visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/pacific-economic-development.html>

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