

International Minerals Innovation Institute – by Robyn Tocker (Regina Leader Post – May 25, 2013)

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In Saskatoon, a unique, non-profit institute funded by Saskatchewan's mining industry and government that brings "market pull" to the design of education and training (E&T) programs and research and development (R&D) projects has been developed. International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII) "is focused on enhancing mining technology, processing technology, environment and safety management, exploration, social license and policy research, and economics of global commodities," said Rodney Orr, executive director of IMII.

The goals are simple: to support the attraction and retention of educated and skilled people; facilitate research and development; and provide leadership and capacity-building in the development of programs, technical certificate and undergraduate and post-graduate programs. IMII has already begun their work to meet the mining industry's needs by entering into an agreement with the University of Saskatchewan to provide \$1.68 million over a three-year period for the start-up costs of developing Mining Option classes for engineering students and to explore the delivery of an undergraduate mining engineering degree.

IMII was designed to fill the gap for skill development through industry-driven education and training programs and R&D within [the Saskatchewan] mineral industry. It is a unique approach.

IMII is funded by industry and the provincial government. IMII anticipates \$43,000,000 over its first five years with \$23,000,000 from the Government of Saskatchewan and \$20,000,000 as potential industry funding. E&T programs are funded in partnership by government and industry including the administrative processes required to ensure that new programs meet industry needs and to the programs themselves," said Orr.

For R&D projects, industry members are given the option of participating in and funding any project IMII's R&D advisory panel recommends, and which do not supplant or duplicate those projects a company would do in its own right.

IMII is important to the mining community because it assists in providing leadership in capacity-building through development of E&T programs. IMII also enhances competitiveness through research, development and knowledge transfer, and provision of those with latest knowledge and skills.

IMII serves Saskatchewan specifically by recognizing the importance of mining to the Saskatchewan economy, helping to ensure the long-term sustainability of mining, and assisting in alleviating Saskatchewan's mineral industry's shortage of specialists in earth, environmental and engineering sciences.

With a staff consisting currently of an independent chair (Dr. Gordon Barnhart) and executive director (Orr), IMII is overseen by an industry majority board of directors. "When at full complement, there will also be two project managers to assist the advisory panels and an executive assistant," said Orr.

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