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Industry at a glance

By Chris Balcom

Saskatchewan Polytechnic home to the new CMI

The International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII) and Saskatchewan Polytechnic are partnering to support the province's mineral industry. Thanks to a \$500,000 donation from IMII announced in mid-November, Saskatchewan Polytechnic is now home to the Centre for Minerals Innovation (CMI).

The centre's purpose is to coordinate training programs that meet the minerals sector's needs. It will collaborate with industry partners and the province's regional colleges to offer courses with a standardized CMI-approved curriculum. The funds are intended to support the centre through the next two years, but CMI will not depend on IMII for financing in the long term.

"[The minerals industry] is a huge part of our economy," said Cristal Glass-Painchaud, the centre's new director. "The province, Polytechnic and industry partners recognized that there was a need for more specific training and education services directly for that sector." CMI's current initiatives include standardizing safety training in the province, offering more business management and leadership courses, and creating a "transition to mining" program. Glass-Painchaud said CMI will also offer simulator training and is looking into industry needs in this area. Most of these new courses will be offered by April 2015.

Engin Özberk, executive director and senior technical advisor at IMII, explained that the collaboration is part of a larger effort to support Saskatchewan's mining industry. In the past year, IMII – which is funded jointly by industry and government – financed nine other projects aimed at supporting mining education, training and research in Saskatchewan. IMII recently pledged \$786,000 toward a joint project by the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Polytechnic to research industry safety culture and practices.

"[CMI and IMII] are very much interested in applied research," Özberk said. "We were looking for new ways of doing things that are regularly applicable to the industry."