Institute gets $1-million infusion from Innovation Saskatchewan

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An additional $1-million investment in the International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII) was announced by Innovation Saskatchewan at the IMII's annual general meeting in Saskatoon on Thursday.

In 2012, Innovation Saskatchewan committed $2.7 million to the minerals industry education and research accelerator, which has helped fund seven education and two research projects to date, bringing its total investment in IMII to $3.7 million.

"We are pleased to provide an additional investment to support two new IMII research and development projects, along with other opportunities, to ensure the industry's continued expansion and prosperity," Innovation Minister Jeremy Harrison said in a press release.

The IMII is a collaboration between industry, government and education and research institutions to focus on industry's top concerns and accelerate the development of solutions for its needs. The IMII has invested in a number of projects that are helping address industry's largest challenges, from the skilled labour shortage to research and development projects addressing safety, environment, extraction, processing, exploration and market issues.

"This additional $1 million will ensure the IMII can continue investing in projects that will enhance Saskatchewan's reputation as a world-leading mining jurisdiction." IMII executive director Engin Ozberk said.

The IMII is the only institute in Canada dedicated to conducting research on the unique problems arising from potash and uranium production - two key minerals in Saskatchewan's mining industry.

"We are very proud of our accomplishments over the last three years," Ozberk told the IMII's annual meeting. "Through the nine projects IMII is funding and the collaboration and commitment of the industry, government and post-secondary education and research institutions, we started producing results." More than 60 First Nations students are being trained at the regional colleges, more than 50 university students are taking the mining engineering options and more than a dozen university graduates and academics are doing research on minerals industry technical solutions to obtain their graduate degrees.

"As we move forward, the current efforts are going to help us to reach our goal of having a world-class minerals industry," Ozberk said.