

Chinese big business likes port's progress: Minister

By Leanne Ritchie
The Daily News

July 5, 2007

Chinese firms are impressed at the speed of the development of the new Fairview Container Terminal, said Colin Hansen, the provincial Minister of Economic Development — and they want to see it continue with Phase 2.

Speaking from Shanghai yesterday, Hansen said he had just completed a meeting with a senior executive from a large shipping company who was “very enthusiastic and bullish about the future of Prince Rupert”.

“Not just this one development, which is scheduled to be completed in October, but in future developments as well,” said Hansen.

The Port of Prince Rupert is in the engineering and planning stage for the second phase of the Fairview Container Port Development, a \$600 million project. This would see an additional 150,000-TEU (average size container) capacity added to the 500,000 TEUs the new terminal will be able handle in Phase One.

The port's development is seen as key to meeting B.C.'s growth in container handling capacity as outlined in the Asia Pacific Gateway Strategy.

“I think with some of projects that have been started in the last five years, we have actually proceeded very efficiently,” said Hansen. “If you think about the Port of Prince Rupert, five years ago it wasn't even in the permitting stage.”

However, the project has proceeded efficiently through the various stages, including the required upgrades to CN Rail's line between Prince Rupert and Prince George.

“I think the Asia business community is impressed with projects like that. What they are not impressed with are some of the other infrastructure projects that have been bogged down in the federal environmental review processes for years and years and years. For example, the expansion of the TSI facilities at Delta Port where the approval for the third berth took about a year or so.”

The permitting process for Phase One went very efficiently, he noted.

“When we talk about Phase Two and Phase Three and beyond, we need to make sure we have a system in place that protects the environment and that all the environmental issues get addressed up front, but let's do it in a time effective manner.”

In most of the discussions Hansen has had with companies looking at using the Asia Pacific Gateway, he said they are concerned about the length of time it will take for approval for future projects.

“I’ve talked to them about the goal we have to harmonize the federal and provincial environmental review processes into one process, we are now doing that with several of the new mines being proposed for British Columbia,” he said.

“I have found they have been very pleased and impressed with the fact we’ve recognized the problem and are striving to do something about it.”

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