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Ministry of Community Services
Western Economic Diversification Canada
Ministry of Economic Development

FUNDS SUPPORT NEW FIRST NATIONS INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

PORT ALBERNI – The federal and provincial governments are investing over \$1.7 million, through the Canada-B.C. Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (CBCMRIF), for the Tsu-ma-as Transformation Centre, a new First Nations interpretive centre in the Alberni Valley.

Nanaimo-Alberni MP James Lunney, on behalf of the Honourable Rona Ambrose, President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, and Ron Cantelon, MLA for Nanaimo-Parksville, on behalf of Community Services Minister Ida Chong, announced the funding today.

“The 8,200-square-foot Tsu-ma-as Transformation Centre will highlight First Nations history and those of other cultures, peoples, and events that have shaped the Alberni Valley,” said Lunney. “Through collaboration and partnership, the Canada-B.C. Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund is building healthier and more prosperous communities in Port Alberni. This innovative project will create jobs and increase tourism in the region.”

The Tsu-ma-as Transformation Centre is envisioned as a place to educate, to tell stories and to entertain. Through the themes of transformation, the Centre will illuminate the rich histories of Port Alberni’s past and unite the community with a renewed commitment to sustainability and ecology that will guide them into the future. The project will include museum displays, a gallery for locally produced art, a multimedia theatre, an exhibition hall, a theatre system and administration offices. This project is conditionally approved pending the completion of an environmental assessment.

“This centre will have much to offer visitors to the region, telling the fascinating stories of our First Nations people as well as the history of others who have helped build this part of British Columbia,” said Cantelon. “We’re pleased a strong partnership between our governments and the Tsu-ma-as Transformation Society is making this centre a reality.”

“The funding announcement is more than about just supporting infrastructure. This is about restoring a community. This cultural centre will become the foundation that will transform our entire community relationship,” said Chief Judith Sayer of the Hupacasath First Nation. “We will use this project as a catalyst to bring a brighter future to all of the residents of Port Alberni, ultimately benefiting the rest of communities within the Pacific Rim.”

Under the initial Canada-B.C. Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (CBCMRIF) Agreement signed in June 2006, the federal and provincial governments each committed \$51 million to the fund, with participating local governments expected to make up the remaining costs. This year, Canada’s New Government and the Province of B.C. have each provided an additional \$23.5 million to the CBCMRIF as part of their commitment to help smaller communities meet their pressing infrastructure needs. This additional funding brings the total federal and provincial investment and matching local government contribution in CBCMRIF projects to over \$220 million.

The majority of the funding is targeted towards communities of less than 250,000 people and at least 60 per cent of the funding will assist with “green projects” such as drinking water supply, treatment and distribution needs. The remaining funds will be dedicated to other projects like tourism, recreation and other infrastructure.

More details on the program are available through the Canada-British Columbia Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund website, at www.canadabcmrif.ca.

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