

S P E C I A L R E P O R T

# Campbell River



S U P P L E M E N T T O T R A D E & C O M M E R C E M A G A Z I N E

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

CAMPBELL RIVER

Right: Campbell River has grown from an isolated logging camp to the primary service and cultural centre for the northern half of Vancouver Island.

Below: Developing its economic potential while retaining its natural beauty is key for Campbell River.



## Campbell River is British Columbia's newest "capital" city



On the edge of the forest; by the edge of the sea; at the edge of discovery: Campbell River is a city in the midst of change. Salmon Capital or Resource Capital; it's a city where human capital makes a big difference.

British Columbia's newest city, Campbell River, has grown from an isolated logging camp to the primary service and cultural centre for the northern half of Vancouver Island in the space of just over 100 years. "There's a spirit to this place, an attitude, a willingness to get things done," explains Patrick Marshall, general manager and EDO for Rivercorp, the Campbell River Economic Development Corporation formed in 2001 to provide business to business services to help stimulate economic development in the city.

"That desire to innovate, to ensure a future, but not at the cost of sacrificing access to the area's natural beauty, is something that sets Campbell River apart."

This city is located on the east coast of Vancouver Island on the Discovery Passage, approximately midway between Victoria to the south, and Cape Scott at the Island's northern tip. Incorporated as a community in 1947, Campbell River officially became British Columbia's newest city in March 2005 and currently has a population of just over 31,000.

"Looking back at history, at where we've come from, one of the quotes I like best comes from Charles Thulin, a Campbell River pioneer who said: 'One day Campbell

BY DAVID HOLMES

# BRITISH COLUMBIA CAMPBELL RIVER

River will be the city of the Island,' and you know, I honestly believe he might be right," Marshall says.

Thulin, along with his brother, opened Campbell River's first hotel in 1904, and is often referred to as a "Founding Father" of Campbell River. A widely circulated historic photograph shows the Thulin hotel in the post World War I era, with a Boeing biplane flying boat moored on the foreshore. "When they took that photo, that was Campbell River," Marshall explains. "Now look how far we've come!"

In 2006, Campbell River will host the Western Canadian Aerospace Alliance and the Pacific Aquaculture Forum, two industry conferences and trade shows that best represent new influences on the local economy. Small business aerospace and the supply chains of business that go along with land, air and sea transportation are growing and key to Campbell River's role as the centre for Vancouver Island's northern end.

Founded on the resource industries, especially forestry and commercial fishing, Campbell River's economic engine is still very much driven by the primary resource-based sector.

"Why is Campbell River such a great place? I guess because of the things it has, and of all the things it doesn't," explains Norm Facey, a manager at Norske Canada's Elk Falls pulp mill, the city's largest single employer (with approximately 1,100 employees).

"As a major employer here, it is (very) easy to attract experienced employees—it's a drop dead gorgeous place to live, very attractive to families, and yet still reasonably priced real estate-wise.

"What doesn't it have? How about sub-zero weather, gridlocked traffic, three feet of snow or escalating crime rates. Put that all together and you have a true winning combination. Being a decent employer helps too."

Aside from the Elk Falls mill, the Campbell River area is home to a number of forestry-related firms ranging from logging companies to secondary processing manufacturers, equipment supply and maintenance outlets.

"You hear in the media that the resource sector is on the way out," Marshall says. "Well forget about it, it's a myth. Forestry is definitely not a 'sunset industry' in Campbell River, it's one of the main eco-



The forest industry dominates the local and regional coastal economy.

omic engines of the area. We also can't forget fishing—commercial, recreational, and farming—and mining, which is experiencing something of a renaissance."

Quinsam Coal, and the nearby Myra Falls mine (a producer of copper and zinc) have about 400 employees between them, while the city's picturesque harbor is home base to a fleet of commercial fishing boats, a testament to the quantity and quality of the region's salmon population. Campbell River Mayor Lynn Nash is espe-

cially proud of the way the city has embraced the economic potential of the area's resources, without sacrificing its uniquely beautiful natural setting.

He points out, "We have a system of greenways and parks which enhance the natural beauty of our region. The City of Campbell River's crest is highlighted by the statement 'enriched by land and sea.' As you visit our beautiful community, you can see how appropriate that statement is."

Lifestyle is a word you hear a lot when talking to the people who live in Campbell River. "The Campbell River lifestyle is something unique, and very special," explains Janet Lackie, director of student services at North Island College, Campbell River's main post-secondary educational institution.

"There are a lot of opportunities in Campbell River for young people. There's work, but there is also the almost limitless recreational potential. Fishing, hiking, camping, kayaking, you name it. Campbell River has all the basic things you would need or want, and some things that you wouldn't expect. We have a very active arts community, and every year it's getting

## CAMPBELL RIVER

Population .....	30,000
Median Employment Income .....	\$23,988
Construction Value 2004 .....	\$34,900,000
Housing Starts (SF) 2003 .....	128

### RESOURCES

Natural Resources .....	Iron ore, oil, fish, copper, coal, water, nickel, timber, sand, lead, livestock, gravel, zinc, clay, gold, silver
Electricity .....	supplied by B.C. Hydro
Natural Gas .....	supplied by Terasen Gas

### TRANSPORTATION

Highways .....	#19, 19A, 28
Rail Service .....	E&N Railway
Local Airport .....	Yes
Scheduled Air Service .....	Yes
Port .....	Yes

### INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS

Manufacturers (25+ employees) .....	125
Major exports .....	Pulp, paper, minerals, aggregate, seafood, solid wood, lumber, wood products
Serviced Industrial Land (acres) .....	100
Price (per acre) .....	\$60,000-80,000
Post-Secondary Schools .....	4

Job Skills Training Programs .....	Yes
Local Business Assistance Programs .....	Yes

### LIFESTYLE

Top Recreational Amenities .....	Pacific Ocean, 12 km of beaches, Mt. Washington Alpine Resort
Golf Courses .....	4
Beaches and Resorts .....	50
Hospitals .....	1

### COMMUNICATIONS

Local radio stations .....	CFWB AM, CJGR FM, CBYT FM
Local TV stations .....	CRTV
Telecommunications infrastructure .....	Locally owned and operated giga-bit fibre optic service

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Trip and meeting planning:  
 Campbell River Visitor InfoCentre 1-866-830-1113  
 Relocation support:  
 Campbell River EDC, Rivercorp  
 900 Alder St.  
 Campbell River, B.C.  
 (250) 830-0411  
 Websites: [www.incampbellriver.com](http://www.incampbellriver.com)  
[www.rivercorp.ca](http://www.rivercorp.ca)

# CAMPBELL RIVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

better, and new things are being added.”

Campbell River shares the new Showcase Festival Society with the Comox Valley, founded by Jeff Hyslop, (Phantom of the Opera) a new resident of Campbell River, in association with David Warrack, musical director and Dannette Bell, artistic director. This is the latest summer theatre group to join the growing list of culture and the arts in Campbell River.

“The new Island Highway has made a

huge difference. If you want to get away, there isn't that feeling of isolation that might once have been the case for new arrivals to the area. I guess the big thing is the ambiance of the place. I'm from a big city, yet I don't feel out of place, or deprived in any way. There's a special calmness about it, a unique feeling of being right on the edge of a frontier, the forest and the sea are right at our doorstep, yet we have all the services we

could want. That combination is difficult to find anywhere else. If a young couple are just starting out they couldn't find a better place to plant roots, to make a home for themselves,” says Lackie.

Transportation links and accessibility are definitely points in Campbell River's favour. Campbell River is at a fork in the road (literally) that links the southern part of Vancouver Island with the vast expanse of its northern half. One road heads west



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The Campbell River Airport has expanded and hosts new aerospace businesses.

to the Myra Falls mine, the community of Gold River and the west coast of Vancouver Island. The other road heads northwest to the town of Port Hardy, Cape Scott, and the world famous killer whale mecca of the Johnstone Strait.

“Our airport is another vital part of the transportation mix,” Marshall says. “We're literally only minutes away from just about anywhere.”

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Others agree. "Our company has just expanded our hangar at the airport for our wholly-owned subsidiary heavy lift helicopter company, Helifor Industries, due to its perfect location," explains Otto Schulte, vice-president of Coastland Woodlands, a major local forestry company.

"We have well over 100 staff living

and raising families in this area. It is an excellent place to raise a family due to the large number of young families who live here. There is a ton of activities to choose from, including an endless choice of outdoor activities for younger people. Campbell River is an easy place to attract workers as the area is so nice."

Another more high-tech attraction for residents and businesses is the fact that Campbell River is fully supported by a locally owned and operated high frequency cable network, offering high speed Internet access for both residential and institutional clients.

Tourism has always been a strong column

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# CAMPBELL RIVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

in the local economic support structure. Tourism-related employment, in the form of accommodation- and food services-related positions, account for something in the neighborhood of 3,000 jobs in Campbell River, making it one of the most active sectors of the employment picture. "Obviously


the potential for the city is centred around the fantastic waterfront, which is second to none," Schulte explains.

The area's rugged frontier setting and its seemingly limitless natural resources may have been the lure that attracted the original loggers and fishermen, and it is those

same rustic qualities that are contributing to new growth in the form of tourism.

"The Salmon Capital of the World, we take that legend very seriously around here," Marshall says.

Work on the new cruise ship terminal progresses and is expected to be complete



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Tourism and retirement living are two of the biggest areas of growth in the local economy.

for 2006, with the first port calls planned for that fall. This project is one of the long-term visions held by the LaichKwilTach, Campbell River First Nations and is an unparalleled opportunity to showcase the city to the world.

"Tourism and retirement living are two of the biggest areas of growth in our local economy. Visitors come here to play, not to stay on the inside of a hotel meeting room without windows somewhere. People come here from all over the world to get out there, and experience nature, to go fishing or whale watching, or whatever sort of activity interests them. If you can think of it, the odds are you can do it here!"

The attraction of retirees to the area has meant growth in residential housing. The average sales price of a home has increased to \$233,000, up from \$170,000 in 2004, driven by new product and new buyers from all across the country.

For the people who live there, Campbell River provides the right mix of services, employment, and community lifestyle. "With an all weather airport, a dozen daily links to Vancouver (and one of the best places in Canada to learn how to fly), a low crime rate, decent schools, a good hospital right in the middle, North Island College, and not a lot of concern about neighbourhood violence for your kids, Campbell River has just about everything going for it," Elk Fall's Facey says.

"I can't imagine a better place to live or to work!" ▲



## PALLAN TIMBER PRODUCTS, LTD.

**Main Office**  
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 Campbell River, BC  
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 Phone: (250) 287-9201  
 Fax: (250) 286-3868

**Vancouver Office:**  
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call 250 830-0999  
[www.communityfutures-strathcona.com](http://www.communityfutures-strathcona.com)

The Enterprise Centre in Campbell River is the Regional Small Business BC Centre on Vancouver Island North. It is located at 900 Alder Street next door to Campbell River City Hall, open Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm [PST]. The centre offers fibre optic internet services and Small Business BC resource people through the Marc Hylands room, Boardroom, Seminars, Training and personnel with the right skill sets to assist people thinking, launching and growing Small Business on the North Island. Our BC Metro Centres: Vancouver call 1 800 667-2272 | Victoria call 250 384-1516

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