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New grain terminal floated for NV

International demand spurs Lynnterm expansion plan

Brent Ririchter / North Shore News
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The North Vancouver waterfront could soon be home to a massive new grain export terminal.

Western Stevedoring's Lynnterm West Gate facility at the foot of Brooksbank Avenue has been a break bulk facility since the 1970s, but the company has partnered with Manitoba-based G3 Global Holdings to build a new grain terminal.

Though the designs haven't been finalized, the terminal will require silos big enough to hold 180,000 tonnes of grain and export six million tonnes per year.

"There's a lot of activity that needs to be done on site for a facility of this size. This is one of the largest developments that will have happened in Port Metro Vancouver for quite some time. This is the first large grain terminal that will have been built since the early 1960s," said Karl Gerrand, G3's CECEO.

G3 is still trying to determine whether it's feasible to construct the facility based on whether there are enough grain elevators in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and rail capacity to feed the system. It's likely another four to six months before a decision can be made, Gerrand said, but the company decided to go public with the plans this week because the sheer size involved meant rumours were starting to spread.

"We've got a cast of thousands that are starting to get involved in this project and we also have a local community that we wanted to reach out to and consult with to make sure we're meeting the needs of the local interest groups in the Vancouver area," he said. "This is a project of such size and complexity and significance, it's garnered quite a bit of attention." Once completed, G3 will be in direct competition with North Vancouver's Richardson International and Cargill Canada, as well as other grain terminals on the West Coast. But, Gerrand said, this project will have a more efficient design, with a train loop right down to the water's edge that will allow for up to 130 cars to roll in compared to the 40 or 50 the other facilities can handle. "It's going to allow us to bring in large trains, unload them in a very quick manner - much faster than the existing terminals can unload them and get the train back to the Prairies to fill again, turn around and come back," he said.

By comparison, Cargill Canada's silos on the other side of Neptune Terminals hold 240,000 tonnes and Richardson International's hold about 180,000.

It's too soon to say how much the project will cost to construct but Gerrand estimated it would result in another 60 to 100 new jobs to operate. ncreased demand for grain in Asia is what's spurring the investment, Gerrand said.

I "We've had bottlenecks in the system, especially last year in the grain industry where we had upwards of 60 to 70 vessels at any time sitting out in the Port of Vancouver waiting to be loaded and they just can't get the grain fast enough," he said.

Should G3 pursue the project and Port Metro Vancouver give it the necessary permits, Gerrand said construction should start by next summer and have the terminal online for 2019's fall harvest.

The existing break bulk operations at Lynnterm West Gate can be shifted over to the East Gate facility on the other side of Lynn Creek as it too will be expanded, according to Western Stevedoring president Brad Eshleman.

Eshleman said he expects a robust consultation process with local stakeholders as Port Metro Vancouver assesses whether or not it should be built.

"This is a very significant terminal development in the Burrard Inlet. We'll definitely be doing all our due diligence with respect to dealing with the community, dealing with the environmental issues. We very much want to be a good corporate citizen in dealing with all this stuff," he said. "This is really a good news story. It's really positive news for the farmers throughout the Prairies. It's very good news, we believe, for job creation on the North Shore and the community."