



## World's largest telescope to be built in Port Coquitlam: Group of universities behind plan expected to cost \$750m

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Plans are under way to build the world's largest telescope in a Port Coquitlam warehouse. The international engineering firm **Amec** is taking the lead in plans to build the huge device known as the Thirty Metre Telescope. **Amec's** communications manager, John Kageorge, said the scope, which will take at least 10 years to build, is a big leap from existing technology.

"In a sense, today, astronomers are looking at stars with a black-and-white television from the '50s. This telescope will give them HDTV -- large screen, too," said Kageorge.

The observatory building that will house the mammoth telescope will be the size of four football fields. The telescope itself will be one football field in size. Suggested locations for its eventual home are northern Chile, northern Mexico, and at the top of the Mauna Kea volcano in Hawaii, where many observatories are already located.

The project is the work of an international consortium of universities. Construction is set to begin in 2008.

David Halliday, **Amec's** vice-president and director of special projects, said \$10 million has already been raised toward concept designs. Total costs are expected to reach \$750 million.

Halliday will unveil preliminary drawings for the telescope in a speech to the Vancouver Board of Trade on Wednesday. Halliday said the largest telescope on earth today is the Keck telescope in Hawaii that has a 10-metre primary mirror. The new one will have a 30-metre mirror made up of hundreds of smaller parts. "We're moving into a telescope that has 780 little pieces of glass that have to be worked together to come up with the primary mirror," he said. "A lot of the technology that we'll need in order to make this telescope work hasn't really been created yet. It's a big challenge."

**Amec** has 44,000 employees in North America and Europe. Last June the Port Coquitlam office helped design and build an unmanned balloon-carried telescope launched by NASA in Sweden.

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