

UNBC funding announcement

Premier Gordon Campbell
February 17, 2005

Check Against Delivery

Let me thank all of you for coming today and for being part of this.

Under the leadership of deputy premier, Shirley Bond, Minister of Advanced Education, there was a real partnership built around the vision for the University of Northern British Columbia. It's been a partnership of the government's vision, Charles Jago's vision, and the vision of this community.

Prince George has always recognized UNBC as a critical part of their future, as a critical part of the future of the entire northern part of our province.

Shirley Bond, as the Minister of Advanced Education, always reminded us of that. She did such a great job there that I decided that she should actually take on the task of being Minister of Health Services so she can take advantage of all the doctors we're going to graduate from UNBC in the years ahead.

Pat Bell has also been a very strong advocate for Prince George. Not just as a resource centre for mining and for forestry, but also as a centre for research, as a centre of learning, and as a centre of new knowledge - tools we will need to move to the next decade ahead of us.

Without the vision, leadership, and commitment of Dr. Jago and all of his faculty and staff here at UNBC, we would not have been able to accomplish what we have. Right here at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George you are part of an institution that has been recognized by *Maclean's* magazine as: "Western Canada's number one small university."

While you may be small in size and number of students, you're not small in terms of ideas, and the vision you have for the future of UNBC. You recognize that the horizons ahead of you are rich with opportunity, opportunities for people here from Prince George, but for people across the province, in the north and the south, and, indeed, from across the country, because you offer something special at UNBC. And we want to build on that.

Last year, 2004, marked the tenth anniversary of this institution. UNBC is now the home of 3,600 students. Over the next five years that number will grow to 4,000 student spaces in the province of British Columbia. That growth you've seen over the last decade, not just in student numbers and in population, but in reputation, is something we want to build on as we move ahead.

Last summer it started with the announcement of the new Northern Medical Program, with a \$12-million Health Sciences Centre. I've had a chance to meet the first class of students in the Northern Medical Program, and have been with them down at UBC's new B.C. Life Sciences Centre, and with their colleagues at the University of Victoria. I can tell you they are proud to be part of the University of Northern British Columbia, and we're proud to have them here.

It's important to build not just on your success, but to build on your reputation. So today I'm pleased to announce, first, that the province will be committing \$2.8 million to renovate and to upgrade the Geoffrey R. Weller Library here at the University of Northern British Columbia.

As UNBC's founding president, Geoffrey Weller had a strong sense of what UNBC could contribute, to the well-being and educational opportunities of British Columbians, from the time that this university was first created.

In any institution the library is the heart of that institution; it's a critical to their research, and is at the centre of the opportunities young people will pursue.

The library renovations will start later this month. We're expecting the first phase of completion will be done by the end of April.

But there's more that we have to do. As we add students, it's important to add physical plans that meet their needs.

So the province of British Columbia will be investing \$29 million for a new Teaching and Learning Centre right here at the University of Northern British Columbia. It's going to be a 9,200-square foot building with new classrooms, new labs, new offices, and new study spaces. It will create capacity for 433 students in programs like business and education and nursing, physics, and social work. Construction of this new learning centre will begin this summer, and students and faculty will be moving in by January of 2007.

Together, these two projects represent a \$31.8 million investment in the future of the University of Northern British Columbia.

Sometimes when you're at an institution like UNBC, you may lose track of how important it is to all of us in British Columbia. UNBC is one of the cornerstones of our educational future in this province. It is a cornerstone that will create the foundation for a future for countless numbers of graduates from this institution. They will come, and they will work in communities across our north and throughout our province and our country.

I am very optimistic about the future of this institution, the future of our province and the future of our north. And I feel that way because of you - because of your ideas, your imagination, and your commitment to a truly great institution in a great city.

Thank you very much.