

**College of New Caledonia and the University of Northern British Columbia  
Announcement**

**Premier Gordon Campbell  
June 4, 2004**

*Check Against Delivery*

Let me start by saying thanks to all of you for being here today.

I just want to pick up on something that Pat Bell said, because it is important for people in Prince George to recognize that is a community being shaped by the people who live here. We look to the people of Prince George and the community of Prince George to have a vision for your future that you define.

Of course, I am pleased to be here with Pat Bell. As you know, Pat is passionate about the north. He's also passionate about mining, so I made him Minister of State for Mining. For the first time in a long time, people from around the world are talking about the mining potential of British Columbia.

This is important in terms of what we're going to announce today, because what you'll hear from mining companies today is with the 300-percent increase we've seen in exploration taking place in mining across this province, we are already developing a technical and trades shortage in mining that we have to start to fill. That's largely because of the excellent efforts of Pat. Pat, I want to say thank you very much for the contribution you're making to all of us.

I also want to talk briefly about Shirley Bond. Shirley has taken on an exceptional obligation to those of us in government. Most of us who are elected are excited about education and the opportunities it presents in our communities and our regions of the province. When we looked at advanced education one of the things that we saw was, frankly, a shrinking of opportunities that was developing throughout the nineties.

After UNBC was opened, there was sort of a stasis. Not very much was happening except we were pushing university and college education further and further beyond the reach of our students that were graduating from high school. When you think of it, there were programs that you needed a 90 percent average to get into. Now, all of you who had a 90 percent average when you graduated from school stand up. It's tough to get a 90 per cent average.

What we said to Shirley is we're going to have to build a financial foundation that will allow us to build a future. But I want to send a message to young people in this province. If you're willing to work in high school, if you get a B or better in high school, we're going to provide you with opportunities to access the college or university education that you want, and Shirley has picked up that challenge.

In February of this year we announced that there would be an expansion of advanced education opportunities on top of the other things that we have already announced. We announced that there'd be 25,000 new spaces created for colleges and universities and people across this province to pursue their goals, to develop their educational curriculum that they wanted to follow and so they could realize their dreams.

We are also going to almost double the number of doctors that we graduate in British Columbia, and for the first time ever we are going to be graduating students in rural and remote medicine right here in Prince George for the north of British Columbia.

There have been new expansions to the regional hospital. And there have been massive increases in the number of nurses that we're graduating. In the last three years we have committed to create 1,800 additional nursing spaces in colleges and universities across the province.

And we know that when we train people and give them their education in the communities they live in, they stay there. Thirty-eight nurses were graduated from here in the north last year, and 33 of those graduates stayed here and are practicing their profession, right here, in the north of British Columbia.

So there's a great deal that's happening in Prince George, and today I'm glad to be here announcing with my colleagues that there's more still to come.

The College of New Caledonia is celebrating 35 years of excellence. Since 1969, when it first opened, the College of New Caledonia has served this community. Since 1969, the population of Prince George has tripled. The College of New Caledonia has grown from 250 students to 500 students in six campuses and two learning centres across northern British Columbia.

Last year the province committed \$11.6 million to help build a new CNC-UNBC campus in Quesnel. That will be opening in September in 2005.

Now it's time for CNC to grow again. Today, I'm pleased to announce that we will be investing \$6.46 million to create a new CNC trades and technology centre right here in Prince George.

It will be open in May of next year, and it will be opening, right here, in this building. This is the kind of innovation, this is the kind of creativity that's essential as we start to build the future of British Columbia. It will be able to accommodate two-thirds more students than CNC's current trades program, opening up more opportunities in programs like carpentry, welding, mechanics, electrical engineering, and more.

Trades offer exceptional job opportunities in our future. Over the next decade we estimate there will be a million new job openings in B.C., and one out of every six of those jobs will require a skilled tradesperson. The trades offer great opportunities for long-term, secure and stable employment.

CNC has been a northern centre of learning and of trades training for the last 35 years, and it's going to play a very pivotal role as we look to the future of the north. But CNC offers more than trades, so we will also be creating 400 new seats at CNC by 2010.

Simply put, that means more choices for students right here in Prince George and in Quesnel and Burns Lake and Mackenzie and Vanderhoof and Fort St. James and McBride and Valemont. It means providing programs to people closer to where they live, and we know that means we're providing those programs in a far more cost-effective way than we have in the past.

There's 400 more seats for programs like the northern outdoor and recreation ecotourism program, to take advantage of northern tourism opportunities; programs like CNC's innovative forestry programs because forestry is the future of British Columbia, it is the future of our resource communities, it is the future of our economies, and it is the future of family security and stability as we look to the years beyond.

It means additional program potential in nursing, through a program that is currently jointly offered with UNBC, to provide quality care to the people that live in the north.

And more students who want to continue with the university transfer programs will be able to do that, right here, in Prince George because as well as 400 new seats for CNC, I am pleased to announce today - because of the hard work of Shirley Bond and Pat Bell - we will also be adding 600 new seats to UNBC by 2010. That's a 21 per cent increase in the number of students at UNBC.

Sixty-four of those new seats will go to computer science, and computer and electrical engineering; 70 to nursing and to health; 34 to teaching; and the rest will build upon other UNBC programs like first nations studies where UNBC has been recognized as a leader in opening up opportunities for 77 bands across this region.

Wherever northern students' dreams lie, UNBC stands ready to help them reach their dreams. I want to say thank you to you, Charles Jago, for that.

Those spaces are on top of the new northern medical program. Its first 24 students are beginning at UBC in September, and they'll be moving here to Prince George to start their studies in January.

Taken together, today's announcements mean 1,000 new spaces for northern students, and a new trades training centre of excellence right here in Prince George so that thousands of students can live closer to where they want to learn. They can build their future here in the north, in the communities where they live. This is what's important about that: we know that when you can find your education close to where you live, you can save up to \$6,000 a year in terms of getting your degree or getting your certificate or diploma, and that's an important factor as well for most students that go to school. An even brighter future stands ahead for Prince George.

This is part of the largest post-secondary school expansion that we've seen in British Columbia in 40 years. We're able to do that because of the hard work of British Columbians. We're able to do that because people in industry and in communities across the province have made some very difficult choices over the past few years to build a foundation that we can now move together with as we create the kind of future that British Columbians want.

I've been coming to Prince George for quite a few years now. The first time I came to Prince George was in 1966. But I can tell you, since I started coming as a provincial official, since I started coming as someone who was seeking support, there is one thing that has always touched me about this community: it's the vision of the people who live here; it's the confidence that you have in your own ability to deliver on the great assets that you have here in Prince George.

You sit on the banks of one of the Fraser River. You sit in the midst of one of the most incredible resources around: a forest that most of the world would love to have. You sit at the heart of mineral opportunities and energy opportunities that are second to none.

And you have taken a community, and you've made it whole. You've made it whole by thinking of what you want to do, by working with one another, by reflecting on the excellent leadership you've had in your public institutions.

Again, on behalf of my colleagues let me say to each of you here today: thank you for your leadership; thank you for what you do for all of the families that live here in Prince George. But equally importantly, thank you for reaching out beyond Prince George to other communities in the north, to other parts of British Columbia to say: we're ready to lead; we are ready to go forward; we are ready to pursue our dreams; give us the tools, and we'll deliver.

Here's some tools. I know you'll deliver.

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.