

## **Northern Lights College Oil and Gas Centre**

**Premier Gordon Campbell**

**February 4, 2005**

### *Check Against Delivery*

Thank you all very much.

I didn't realize why they had us flying around the Fort St. John airport as much as we did, but it's because they were waiting to show off your brand new terminal there. It's a spectacular new facility, and you all should accept our congratulations for that. Congratulations, particularly to you, Steve, and to your city council.

I'm very pleased to be here with Richard Neufeld, our MLA for Peace River North, and Blair Lekstrom, our MLA for Peace South. They have been tireless advocates not just for your region, not just for agriculture and energy, but for the social well-being and the health of the Peace River region. They've been very strong proponents of an institution that's not only important to the northeast, but to all of British Columbia—and that institution is Northern Lights College.

As the economy grows, as investment in the province grows, we have to start thinking ahead to where we want to be and what we want to deliver to people all over the north of British Columbia.

In this particular community, right here in Fort St. John, you've watched as your population has grown by 10 percent over the last five years, and we're expecting a growth rate of about 20 percent over the next five years. This is an economy that is flourishing, and with a flourishing economy comes new opportunities but also new obligations for us to try to maximize the potential for the opportunities in front of us. This is a region that British Columbia has taken a great deal of pride in over the last little while.

Today's announcement reflects a truly important partnership that's been developed by working with First Nations, government and industry.

We had a forum here two years ago where we talked about building a foundation that would truly reach out to and take advantage of the opportunities here in the northeast. The industry came forward and told us some of the changes we needed to make.

So we made a number of royalty changes in the spring of '03. We had one of the largest lease files that we've had in the history of the province with EnCana. I'm very pleased that Gwynne is with us today, because there's nothing more important than when someone comes and says: if you do X, we'll do Y. When we did X, it was great to see Y delivered, Gwynne. Thank you very much for that.

The energy industry is a high-risk business. It's out on the land base, it's exploring, it's drilling, it's taking advantage of all of the knowledge that we can apply, but we should all recognize there's risks involved in that.

We've tried to create a foundation that encourages exploration of our natural resources in the province. We've listened to industry by asking them what we needed to do to improve the opportunities here in the northeast, in the Nechako Basin to the southwest of Prince George and the Bowser Basin to the northwest of Terrace and, of course, the exceptional potential that we have in the offshore and how we can manage that in a way that's environmentally sound and scientifically secure.

Thanks to that partnership we've seen enormous success here. We had 1,300 wells drilled in 2003-04. That's a 64-percent increase over the year before; \$3.5 billion came into the province invested in oil and gas last year. We're expecting about \$4 billion this year.

EnCana has been a big part of that. Their leadership has made a big difference to all of us in British Columbia and Gwynne, on behalf of all the people who count on the oil and gas industry, we want to say thank you very much for your continued leadership.

Northern Lights College is a truly important institution, and I'm really pleased that I'm here with Jim Kassen today. Jim, thank you for being here. Northern Lights is going to be an important part of our future.

While we're talking about leadership, we should celebrate the leadership of Jim Kassen. Jim has been the longest-serving president of any college in British Columbia. He has been an educational leader for this part of the province.

He's served as the president for 25 of Northern Lights' 30 years of existence, and he tells me that he's going to take a rest at the end of April this year. He's going to retire. So I think this is an opportunity to start saying thank you for all you've done for all of us, Jim. Thank you very much.

I thought it would be a good idea, Jim, to give a little bit of a retirement-sort-of-presentation to you. We wanted it to be something that will continue to build this exceptional institution right here in Fort St. John. Today I'm pleased to announce that the province, with industry partners, will fund a new \$12-million centre for oil and gas training at Northern Lights to support the Fort St. John campus.

The province will be putting \$6 million towards that capital improvement. EnCana - again, thank you very much - will be contributing \$3 million and other industry partners who will be announced in the weeks ahead will be adding the additional \$3 million.

What do we expect? Construction to start in the spring of this year, and for students to be training in the oil and gas industry training centre of excellence by the winter of 2006, which is just one year away.

Northern Lights College's programs have made it a leader in British Columbia, but demand has far outstripped its capacity, so as we invest in this training centre we're expecting to see a substantial increase in the number of spaces. In fact, today there are 117 spaces available. This will be adding an additional 180 spaces for training in oil and gas exploration right here in Fort St. John.

As we build this centre of excellence and build an energy industry that's known for its excellence in British Columbia, we want British Columbians to be able to take advantage of it. We want them to train here in British Columbia. We know what's happening right now: many people are getting excited about what they can do in energy and they go elsewhere for their training then find work and stay there.

We'd like people in British Columbia to know they can be trained in British Columbia, they will find work in British Columbia and we will build a year-round industry with properly trained expertise that is second to none in the world, and that's what we're doing with this announcement today.

This is going to mean more opportunities for oil and gas field operations, more opportunities for training in heavy-duty technicians, welding, piping trades, heavy equipment operators, power engineering and gas processing. This means more spaces for B.C. students. It means more B.C.-trained workers staying in our province. It means more jobs for British Columbians.

We should remember that every single one of those jobs is not just a number; it's a person. It's a person and their family. You know here in Fort St. John that people and their families make your community. As we strengthen the opportunities for people and families, we strengthen communities and as we strengthen communities, we strengthen our province.

This is a very important day for Northern Lights, for the young people and the people that will get their trades training in the energy industry from across our province. It's a day for celebration, and it's a day for celebration of partnerships. We are building a true partnership in British Columbia with the energy industry for a future that every British Columbian can count on.

Thank you very much.