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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Advanced Education
Industry Canada

Premier Opens Bioenergy Plant at UNBC

PRINCE GEORGE – The University of Northern British Columbia – the first university in Canada to use bioenergy from waste wood products to heat campus buildings – celebrated the official opening of its new Bioenergy Plant today.

The plant, which uses innovative technology to convert bark, branches, sawdust and leftover wood products from nearby mills into a highly efficient means of heating campus buildings, is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the university by 3,500-4,000 tonnes annually. That is the equivalent of taking 1,000 cars off the road every year.

The heating plant is a component of the university's bioenergy program plan to help meet its current and future energy needs, as well as contributing to research and development, training, education and the development of bioenergy projects and demonstration opportunities for northern communities.

UNBC received \$15.7 million from the federal and provincial governments for its biomass gasification system, and \$5 million from both governments for upgrades to campus heating equipment.

This project is part of the federal government's two-year, \$2-billion plan to repair and expand research and educational facilities at Canadian post-secondary institutions. It was among 39 projects at post-secondary institutions across the province to receive funding from the Knowledge Infrastructure Program.

Quotes

Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia:

"Partnerships like the one between UNBC and Nexterra showcase not only BC's ability to demonstrate leadership in innovation in the clean energy and technology space, but also support our greater goals of driving strong economic growth and job creation around the province. From local employment opportunities in manufacturing, construction and ongoing fuel supply, these are the types of projects that will secure BC's future for the long term."

Dick Harris, Member of Parliament for Cariboo-Prince George –

“Our government’s investment in post-secondary infrastructure has given UNBC’s students and researchers the facilities they need to be global leaders in their fields. This project will allow UNBC to strengthen its capacity and build on its reputation as a leading institution of higher learning.”

George Iwama, president of University of Northern British Columbia –

"This is an important development for UNBC, but it's also very important for the local forest industry and the 621 communities across Canada that are reliant on forests. This facility is a showpiece that will serve as a unique platform for education and research. Biomass is a sustainable, renewable energy source that is critical to the diversification of the forest industry and the communities that rely on it.”

Quick facts

- UNBC received \$15.7 million from the federal and provincial governments for its biomass gasification system, and \$5 million for upgrades to campus heating equipment.
- The plant is expected to use 8,000 tonnes of waste wood per year.
- Biofuel will replace 85 per cent of the university’s natural gas use.
- Switching from natural gas to wood waste is expected to save UNBC more than \$500,000 a year in fuel costs.
- UNBC began their bioenergy program as a way to help local industry diversify their activities after the pine beetle infestation.
- The bioenergy plant was built to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) gold standard.
- The bioenergy plant represents completion of the first of three phases in UNBC’s Northern Forest Product and Bioenergy Innovation Centre project.
- UNBC is working with governments, communities, the private sector, First Nations, and educational partners to develop local solutions to by integrating campus operations, education, and research on a single site.
- UNBC recently won a top award for campus sustainability projects in North America – an honour it shared with Harvard University. The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education selected the university’s bioenergy project for its ability to connect teaching and research to campus operations, while acting as a model for communities and other campuses.

Learn more

- <http://www.unbc.ca/green/energy.html>
- http://www.unbc.ca/media/2010/10_12bioenergyaward.html

Knowledge Infrastructure Program

The Knowledge Infrastructure Program is helping to provide economic stimulus and promote employment by creating jobs for engineers, architects, tradespeople and technicians. In B.C. the federal government is providing up to 50 per cent of the cost of selected projects on a cost-share basis with the Province.

The total investment in these projects is \$520 million including contributions from institutions. The projects are also part of an overall \$14-billion capital infrastructure program supported by the Province to create jobs and vital public infrastructure in every region of B.C.

Canada's Economic Action Plan set out to stimulate the Canadian economy and to improve our long-term competitiveness through \$12 billion in new infrastructure investment, which includes the \$2-billion Knowledge Infrastructure Program.

For more information on the provincial government's three-year job creation plan, visit www.gov.bc.ca/infrastructure. For more information about the Knowledge Infrastructure Program visit www.ic.gc.ca/knowledge-infrastructure.

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