

# Northern colleges sign memorandum of action

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On the heels of increased enrolment in many of its programs, Northern Lakes College has recently signed a memorandum of action with several other northern colleges to help share resources.

Northern Lakes College President and CEO Anne Everatt was one of seven college presidents who signed the memorandum at Keyano College in Fort McMurray on March 25. It was also signed by Athabasca University, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Grande Prairie Regional College, Portage College, and Keyano College.

"The memorandum is about collaboration between the northern colleges," said Everatt. "It is about working together so we can enhance student mobility options and experience.

"Alone we can do a lot, but together we can do more," she said.

Northern Lakes has seen a strong increase in their enrolment across the college in several programs over the last few years according to the college. This was one of the reasons for the memorandum said Everatt.

"We are all feeling the growth in the region and the challenges that come with it," she said. "That was one of the big reasons we all felt it was in our best interest to work together."

The fastest growing programs at Northern Lakes have been Crane and Hoisting, Social Work and Power Engineering programs.

"The number of students went up from 220 last year to 384 this year in Power Engineering," said Everatt. "We've been seeing steady enrolment increases in most of our programs across the region, but that one is a good example."

While this kind of growth is seen as a good thing by Northern Lakes, it has also become a challenge to meet the growing needs, including faculty and facilities.

"To get a power engineering certificate you need to complete steam time, right now in Peace River we don't have a lab for that, so students have to complete their steam time elsewhere," said Everatt.

Northern Lakes College is currently building the \$2 million lab in Peace River.

Faculty can be a challenge to find as well.

"Most power engineers are either working or retired," said Everatt. "That makes it a challenge to find qualified teachers at the rate we need.

"Since 2007 we've seen enrolment increases each year," said Everatt.

She points to economic growth and changing demographics as the reason for the growth.

"There is a lot of interest in programs like Power Engineering or Crane and Hoisting because of the oil industry and the opportunities there," said Everatt. "But they're also industries where many of the current employees are reaching retirement. So young people are wanting to take advantage of the opportunities.

"We hope to be able to meet those needs," she said.

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