

Spotlight

on Clean Energy Technologies
April 21, 2010

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BC's colleges rise to the province's clean energy challenge.

In the recent Speech from the Throne, the BC Government committed to maximize BC's potential as a clean energy powerhouse and to be a global leader in climate action by 2030. Colleges are at the frontline of educating students and workers and must respond by providing the education and skills training necessary to meet this challenge. With 11 colleges and almost 70 campuses in communities throughout the province, BC's colleges are uniquely poised to meet this clean energy challenge.

British Columbia has an abundant supply of clean, renewable energy that can be developed to make the province energy self-sufficient while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. By creating partnerships with industry, business, environmental stewards and other post-secondary institutions, BC's colleges can and are creating opportunities and programs that will provide students with the necessary skills to actively participate in the needed change.

Below are a few examples to highlight how BC's colleges are responding to the clean energy challenge.

At **Northwest Community College**, second-year geography students are looking into the **implications of developing a run of the river hydroelectric project** on the Shames River near Terrace.

Since early January 2010, students from instructor Gord Weary's Hydrology and Environments & Society courses have been conducting hydrological and environmental surveys within the Shames Watershed, west of Terrace and home to the Shames Mountain Ski Resort. The work is part of a joint community project looking at the hydrological, environmental, cultural and economic implications of a hypothetical run of the river hydroelectricity development on the Shames River.



"The hydrological part of the project is to determine the flow potential of Shames River to generate hydroelectricity as a run of the river project," said Weary. "The electricity generated would be used to provide power to the ski hill and any excess would be sold to the (BC Hydro) grid. The social environmental part of the project is to determine both the positive and negative consequences of this type of development in the watershed."

The project provides a first step analysis and will begin to gauge the practical feasibility for run of the river proposals in this area, while also examining the communities' acceptance and the potential environmental consequences. If community interest is still high, next year's classes will complete a follow-up to this study.

Alexi Zawadzki, president and CEO of Swift Power, says the company is very excited to know that the College is offering courses in hydrology and environmental sciences and Swift Power hopes to be able to offer future employment to NWCC students.

"Swift Power and Cambria Gordon were excited to participate in a field program that contributed to the students' learning," Zawadzki said. "We found the students to be very competent, inquisitive, and proficient in the outdoor classroom. I hope to repeat this exercise in future years, which provides students with an opportunity to practice the knowledge from the classroom in a real-world application."



The Wind Turbine Maintenance Technician program offered at Northern Lights College's Dawson Creek Campus launched this past February with 16 students. This is the only program of its type in the province, and includes a focus on Millwright and Electrician trades training, in addition to specific training for wind turbine maintenance. The program is one of the cornerstones of Northern Lights College's new **Centre of Excellence for Clean Energy Technologies**.

Demand for skilled technicians is strong as the wind energy sector steadily expands. Bear Mountain Wind Park opened in 2009 and is located about five miles west of Dawson Creek, on Bear Mountain. Additionally, a new wind park is in development near Chetwynd, and several other applications have either been recently approved or are being considered throughout the Peace Region.

At **Okanagan College's Penticton campus** six students are piloting a new **Domestic/Residential Geothermal Technician apprenticeship program** – the first of its kind in the province.

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The two-year trades training program is just one in a series of new program developments that will be housed in the campus's **Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Building Technologies and Renewable Energy Conservation**.

The building, which will open in March 2011, has been designed as a learning lab. Future students in the geothermal program will be able to study the building's own geothermal loops and clean energy systems to supplement their education and training.

These are just a few examples of new programs that are being developed to meet the **clean energy challenge**. More are underway and we will bring them to you as they become available. It is part of the role of BC's colleges to design and offer programs and courses that reflect the current and emerging needs of business and industry, and the needs of the province's society in general. **Our colleges will continue to create programs that provide students with the skills necessary for tomorrow's jobs.**

As David Suzuki so aptly put, "If we want to put the brakes on global warming and reduce our reliance on nonrenewable fossil fuels, we must look to renewable energy such as solar, wind, hydro, and sustainable bioenergy. Given what the world's leading climate change scientists are saying about the consequences of continuing to burn fossil fuels, we have little time to lose."

BC's colleges realize the urgency of the clean energy challenge and are making it a priority to create programs and partnerships that will make BC a global leader by 2030.



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BC Colleges is a consortium representing BC's 11 public, community colleges serving more than 250,000 students annually with campuses in close to 70 communities throughout British Columbia. BC's 11 colleges offer a comprehensive range of programs from university studies and baccalaureate degrees to career, technical and trades education. All 11 of BC's colleges offer programs that are designed to be accessible, affordable and responsive to the evolving needs of BC communities and industry. For more, visit our [website](#).

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