

Quesnel Cariboo Observer

Aviation course offered at CNC

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A feasibility study is complete and the two-year diploma flight training program at CNC's Nechako campus is ready for its next stage of clearance.

The proposed program, which will be based in Vanderhoof, is different than other diplomas tied to commercial pilot training," project planner with the Vanderhoof campus Susan Mooney said.

"It's geared for success in the North," she said

"It trains students to manage all aspects of business, takes them through their commercial pilot training and offers an optional float rating before completion.

"It will provide an opportunity for northern students to study and work in the North, allowing the northern aviation industry to draw upon a pool of individuals who wish to remain and contribute to the industry in the region."

Vanderhoof is home to one of three remaining private fixed-wing (airplane) flight training schools in northern B.C., providing a partnering opportunity for the College with industry that is already part of Canada's Northern Pilot Network. CNC will partner with the local flight training school in Vanderhoof to deliver the program, envisioned to be delivered in five semesters over a 20- month period, taking students through the private pilot license and commercial pilot license.

The program will also provide business training and offer an opportunity to add on a float rating.

It gives the student a wide variety of choices by offering laddering to a partnered program at the University of the Fraser Valley for multi-engine training and Bachelor degree programs in Abbotsford, as well as the add-on options of instructor rating and a commercial helicopter license in Vanderhoof. Having 16 aviation students will put Vanderhoof on the pilot training radar. The local flight school is already well-established within the region and holds all Transport Canada required certificates.

The study reveals offering the program in Vanderhoof has several benefits. CNC's Vanderhoof campus is located less than five minutes from the Vanderhoof Airport and just upstream from the community float plane dock on the Nechako River.

Additionally, there is uncongested air space in Vanderhoof, which is ideal for flight training. It is only through partnerships and collaboration that a program like this will be successful, said Maureen Mallais, Regional Director of CNC's Nechako Region, which encompasses the Vanderhoof, Fraser

Lake, and Fort St. James campuses.

"We have had great support from the community of Vanderhoof for this initiative," she said, "and from the aviation industry throughout the region. We are thankful to the University of the Fraser Valley and its aviation partner, Coastal Pacific Aviation, for their willingness to work with us and share resources in an effort to further aviation in the North."

The program will have direct benefits to the community of Vanderhoof and the region in the form of employment opportunities.

"What we had to do was identify a niche. We don't want to compete with other pilot training programs, we want to focus on pilots who want to work in the North," said Kathie LaForge, District of Vanderhoof Economic Development Officer. "The proximity to Prince George and their international flights will work in our favour because some of the private plane operators will know we're only a hop, skip and jump away."

LaForge also hopes that once the program is in place, it will generate economic spin-off.

"We hope it will lead to businesses supporting one another," said LaForge.

School District 91 Nechako Lakes which has served on the Steering Advisory Committee from the beginning, will also benefit if the pilot program takes off.

"It's a win-win situation for us," School District 91 superintendent, Ray LeMoigne said.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for students to pursue another career option."

Those options not only include pilots, but aviation engineers and mechanics. Those students who do show an interest in aviation would be steered towards math and physics classes. Developing an aviation studies program for Grades 11 and 12 is also an option.

"Students also have the potential to graduate from Grade 12 by the end of their first semester and then take four more courses in the pilot program," LeMoigne said.

"As things evolve, there's also the potential of international students coming and studying with us and laddering into college. It injects further diversity into the program."

For the program to receive the next stage of

clearance, the college and its partners now have to seek funding for and acquire a flight training device/simulator; form a technical advisory group to assist in the detail planning of the program and work hand-in-hand with the District of Vanderhoof's airport development planning to synchronize efforts and realize the most benefits at the airport for the community and surrounding area.

A copy of the feasibility study is on CNC's website at www.cnc.bc.ca.

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