

Campus cuts cause concern

Reports this week that the provincial government had put plans for the North Cariboo Community Campus on hold for 18 months were met with dismay from community leaders.

On Monday, the B.C. Liberal government quietly called off building projects tabbed at \$4.2 million across the province, including colleges in New Westminster, Chilliwack, Burns Lake, Kamloops, Courtenay, Cloverdale, Dawson Creek, Cranbrook, Quesnel and Williams Lake. The projects are on hold pending a spending review.

Post Secondary Education Council chair Nate Bello says the move comes as a big disappointment, noting that over 1,300 Quesnel and area residents put \$10 of their own money forward to

show their concrete support for the project. He says that, since a review has been called, it should be done as quickly and expeditiously as possible.

"It is imperative that we get this project underway quickly," he says. "We are depending on it."

Mr. Bello notes that Liberal leader Gordon Campbell had earlier said that his government's top priority is education.

"If that isn't followed through, that statement will be on his shoulders," Mr. Bello says.

Despite the setback, Mr. Bello remains optimistic that the project will eventually go ahead.

"We have a mission. We have a goal," he says. "This is a bump in the road and we'll keep going until we get

our campus. Nothing will deter us."

For his part, Quesnel CNC head John Bowman echoes Mr. Bello's disappointment, noting that the principle players had not been formally notified.

"We had an indication last week, but we had hoped we would get a press release," he says. "We got more information from the Vancouver Sun."

Mr. Bowman also expressed guarded optimism about the future of the project.

"The key is not to sit back and let this be an 18-month process," he says. "The solace we have is that we have a very strong case. There is no community in British Columbia that has needs as great as ours."

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