

Building a better N.B.

A4, Telegraph-Journal

Published Thursday January 22nd, 2009

With a \$44 million investment on Tuesday, Premier Shawn Graham announced that his self-sufficiency agenda is on track.



New Brunswickers couldn't be happier to hear it.

The money will fund a major expansion of the New Brunswick Community College, retuning it to meet the demands of the growing energy hub.

For more than five years, students, trades unions and construction companies have been warning government there is a bottleneck in the college system. The Graham government has acted. The premier's personal commitment to the project is what has made the difference, and it will ensure energy mega-projects create the maximum number of jobs for New Brunswickers.

This is a huge endorsement of New Brunswick's economic potential, and a very shrewd investment. As the students trained at in Saint John, Edmundston, Bathurst and Moncton enter the workforce, it won't be long before government recovers its money.

The \$44 million for NBCC-Saint John will fund a centre of excellence in training for the energy and construction sectors. It will allow the college to construct a new building at UNB Saint John, housing programs related to health care. And it will open the college's doors to 600 more students.

This is a strategic step in building a stronger, more diverse economy. It is absolutely essential if New Brunswick hopes to realize the full value of emerging opportunities in energy and life sciences.

This was spelled out in the Benefits Blueprint presented to government last year. Without skilled workers, companies would not be able to proceed with the series of mega-projects planned for New Brunswick's energy sector. With this anchor investment, the government is giving New Brunswickers a chance to turn an economic boom into the basis of a new and sustainable economy.

The Benefits Blueprint envisioned New Brunswick becoming a regional training centre, with knowledge industries growing around the energy hub. Tuesday's announcement brings that vision closer to reality, and it affirms Premier Graham's personal leadership on the Benefits Blueprint file.

New Brunswickers want the high-paying jobs and stability new industries will provide. We congratulate Premier Graham for investing up front to ensure that those jobs materialize and that New Brunswickers will have the training to take them on.