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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education

### **B.C. sows seeds of new wood engineering master degrees at UNBC**

PRINCE GEORGE – Students in B.C.’s thriving wood industry will be able to build on their expertise through two new master programs in engineering to be offered by UNBC at the new Wood Innovation and Design Centre (WIDC) in Prince George, Advanced Education Minister Amrik Virk announced today.

A one-year, course-based master of engineering in integrated wood design will train students in technical specializations such as wood structure engineering, engineering for sustainable energy, and forest product engineering. It will be complemented by a thesis-based master of science in wood-related engineering research. The new programs will advance B.C.’s Wood First agenda.

“Our government is developing real-world skills that are aligned with labour demand,” said Virk. “The two wood-engineering master degrees at UNBC will let students gain the education and skills needed in a changing labour market, while maintaining B.C.’s position as a world leader in wood technology.”

The Ministry of Advanced Education is providing up to \$466,000 this year to fund start-up costs. The first \$237,000 will be provided immediately to assist with faculty and student recruitment, curriculum development and other components needed to start a new program. Once the programs are established, they will add up to 36 full-time equivalent student spaces.

The new programs will be housed at the new WIDC in downtown Prince George. Construction of the centre started recently and is expected to be completed by fall 2014. Academic and industry partnerships and programs are a key part of the design centre and will bring together builders, architects, designers and engineers to advance the commercialization of value-added wood-building and design products.

“One of our government’s priorities has been adding training capacity in regions across British Columbia to allow students to complete their programs closer to home. These new master degree programs, which focus on wood design and wood-related engineering, will enhance British Columbia’s reputation as a leader in building with wood,” said Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour Shirley Bond.

“UNBC is responding to the need for increased engineering capacity in the North by initiating these new master programs. I commend the provincial government for this important investment, announced today,” said UNBC president George Iwama. “These new, UNBC-trained engineers will be experts in the use of wood as a versatile, sustainable and cost-effective construction product. Our programming, housed in the Wood Innovation and Design Centre, will be both inspiring and innovative.”

“Today’s news is outstanding for B.C. and the future of wood design and engineering,” said Michael Green, principal at Michael Green Architecture. “B.C. is uniquely positioned to become a world leader in new wood technologies and the design of wood buildings. This new master’s program is incredibly important for our future as a province, as we link our strong sustainable forestry industry with a world in need of innovative solutions for the future of building. B.C. has proudly stepped up to deliver, and we can all be excited by this news.”

“Increased engineering capacity in Northern B.C. is paramount to the region’s success. We will see significant major project development and economic development opportunities arise over the next several decades, and a strong contingent of skilled professionals will be required to implement those developments,” said Darby Kreitz, chief executive officer of Allnorth, an engineering and technical services consulting company headquartered in Prince George, and one of B.C.’s fastest growing companies. “As we look to the future of engineering, it’s important that we draw upon the region’s most valuable resource – our people. It’s encouraging to see that the next generation of skilled professionals will hone their skills in Prince George at UNBC.”

#### **Quick Facts:**

- In March 2013, the Ministry of Advanced Education provided UNBC with \$100,000 to support preliminary planning of the new degrees.
- Since 2001, the B.C. provincial government has invested \$95 million in capital projects at UNBC including \$69.6 million by the Ministry of Advanced Education.
- The Province is investing \$25.1 million in the WIDC, with construction underway. The government has committed to having the WIDC open by fall of 2014. It will build on B.C.’s expertise and global reputation as a leader in wood construction, engineered wood products and design.
- Programming provided in the WIDC will advance the province’s Wood First agenda and bring together builders, architects, designers and engineers to advance the commercialization of value-added wood building and design products.

#### **Learn More:**

For more information on BC Jobs Plan and Skills Training Plan:

<http://www.bcjobsplan.ca/skills/bc-skills-and-training-plan/>

For information about UNBC, go to: [www.unbc.ca](http://www.unbc.ca)

To learn more about wood use in B.C.: <http://www.naturallywood.com/>

To learn more about mass timber use in construction: <http://www.masstimber.com/>

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