



# Responding to the Community

Grande Prairie Regional College  
Polytechnic University Business Case

*.... Canada's postsecondary system has to align itself much more closely with the current and future needs of Canadian young people and the rapidly shifting national and international economy. We need responsive, specialized and career-ready programs and much greater engagement of applied researchers with the business community. For Canada to succeed economically, we need young people with the skills that business and government require.... Polytechnics play precisely these roles and have the potential to do even more as full partners in the Canadian postsecondary landscape.*

*- Ken Coates*

*"This is Canada's Polytechnic Moment," 26 June 2013<sup>i</sup>*

## Background

Red Deer College (RDC) and Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC) are proposing a new model of post-secondary institution to meet the challenge posed by Coates, address the need for degree level programming in our regions, and fulfill our mandates to serve communities and learners under the Campus Alberta framework.



The “Polytechnic University” model proposed by RDC and GPRC could be instituted and approved through an Order in Council.

For the past fifty years, RDC and GPRC have responded to the diverse educational and training needs of Central Alberta and Northwest Alberta. We have

delivered diplomas, certificates, trades, university transfer, brokered collaborative and hosted degrees, high school upgrading, and continuing education, ensuring citizens in our regions have access to a responsive, comprehensive and learner centred model of postsecondary education.

The economic growth and diversification enjoyed by our regions makes the attraction and retention of highly skilled workers both a necessity and a challenge; degree programming is urgently demanded by learners, employers and civic leaders in our communities.

In a nation-wide study of post-secondary accessibility, Frenette (2002) found that high school students living more than 80 kilometers from a university are only 58% as likely to attend university as students living within 40 kilometers’ commuting distance; distance is an even greater barrier for students from lower income families.<sup>ii</sup> Red Deer is Alberta’s third largest city, and the largest centre in Western Canada without proximity to a university. Indeed, it is 150 kilometers from the nearest public university. Similarly, Grande Prairie is 458 kilometers from the nearest university; it is further from a university than any other city of its size in Alberta.

High school to post-secondary transition rates and degree attainment rates in the Central Alberta and Northwestern Alberta regions are lower than those of Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge, and bear out the relevance of Frenette’s findings.

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*“...families in our communities pay substantially more for these university degrees because they must bear the additional costs of transportation and housing necessitated by relocation to a university city.”*

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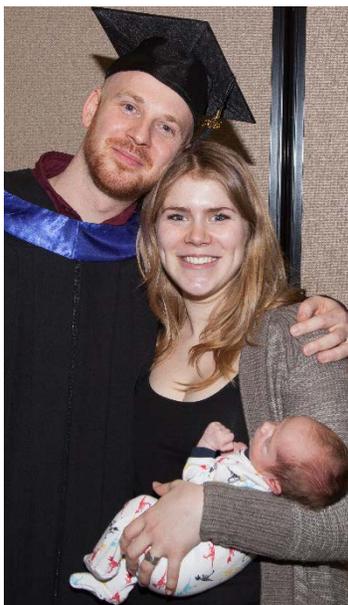
Many individuals from our regions who *do* relocate to attend university do not return, depriving their home regions of sorely needed human capital. It is doubly distressing that families in our communities pay substantially more for these university degrees because they must bear the additional costs of transportation

and housing necessitated by relocation to a university city.

Those degree completion routes we *do* provide, are designed and controlled by large, urban universities. The significant limitations and challenges inherent to the agreements that have governed the delivery of collaborative, brokered and hosted degrees for over twenty years continue to compromise our ability to serve our regions. RDC and GPRC lack the flexibility to provide degree curricula and delivery methods that are both responsive to regional needs and cost-effective. Changes to program entrance requirements, content, graduation requirements, and tuition fees are driven by the universities, with limited opportunity for input from RDC and GPRC.

In addition, RDC and GPRC each offer degree programs governed by the academic policies and requirements of various universities, posing administrative burdens and challenges to the local provision of professional guidance and support for students. The transferability of college courses to university credits, which underpins our collaborative degree agreements, is becoming more challenging despite the best efforts of the academic leadership of our colleges and the respective universities.

However, attaining Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institution status, as Mount Royal and MacEwan have done, is *not* the answer we propose. Such a designation would deprive our institutions of aspects of our



programming and governance essential to our respective Mandates; that is, to both the comprehensive credit and non-credit educational programming that is so crucial to our regions and our institutional cultures. Indeed, we are intent on maintaining the flexible, responsive and fiscally prudent operation of our institutions.

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Our proposal of the Polytechnic University structure fits within Campus Alberta’s Six Sector model by blending elements of three sectors: the Comprehensive Community Institution, the Polytechnical Institution, and the Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institution. For RDC, the model will also incorporate elements of a fourth sector: the Specialized Arts and Culture Institution. Whereas the large centres of Edmonton and Calgary each have institutions in five or six of the sectors; the Central Alberta and Northwest Alberta regions are not large enough to warrant additional institutions, yet require approval to offer programming beyond that permitted by the Comprehensive Community Institution designation.

Why does a polytechnic focus fit for RDC and GPRC, and why is degree granting status needed? NAIT and SAIT are designated as Polytechnical Institutions within the Six Sector Model, with primary credential offerings in apprenticeship, certificate and diploma programs for technical careers, as well as some applied degrees. These programs will remain core at RDC and GPRC. However, the polytechnic descriptor does not adequately reflect the broad scope of our

institutional programming, nor the current and future importance of our university transfer and full degree programming. Thus, we look to exemplars outside Alberta.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University in British Columbia is an institution with similar roots to RDC and GPRC. Kwantlen emphasizes professional, career-focused programs as diverse as the arts, social and related behavioural sciences, health and wellness, business, engineering, education, and trades and technology programs. The Polytechnic University model fosters the active, applied, and experiential learning environment that RDC and GPRC promote to the benefit of our learners and communities. Given autonomy over our own degrees, RDC and GPRC will provide learners with pathways from certificates and diplomas to degrees.

Public credibility and acceptance of Polytechnic University status for RDC and GPRC will be created by the rigorous quality assurance processes of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), and by the established academic reputations of RDC and GPRC. Academic governance structures at RDC and GPRC are under review to ensure the Polytechnic University model will comply with the Post-Secondary Learning Act.

Our regions have told us that degrees are crucially important. RDC and GPRC embrace the imperative of delivering on the value proposition expected by our learners and the taxpayers of Alberta. We can do so by initially introducing only a few degrees into our portfolio of programs, and by limiting these to programs that are already successfully delivered on our campuses. Only as regional need and student demand warrant will we seek to expand degree offerings.

We expect that our rapidly growing regions will demand more degree programs over time, however the success of the Polytechnic

University model requires neither broad expansion of degree programming nor a predominance of degree-level students.

Acceptance of this proposal does not mean an immediate expansion of service; rather, it simply means a transfer of the responsibility for, and the delivery of, those services. The Polytechnic University model provides a strong business case for our institutions' ability to ensure student retention, service stability, and program sustainability in an environment of scarce fiscal and instructional resources. A process of gradual evolution will transform the ability of RDC and GPRC to fully serve our regions.



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We are eager to engage our government stakeholders in a conversation about our institutional capacity to increase postsecondary access to all our regional citizens, including the underserved and underrepresented groups identified in the 2008 *Roles and Mandates* document, as well as the rural and remote

portions of our stewardship regions such as West Yellowhead, Fairview and the communities served by Campus Alberta Central.

Given the opportunity to expand our Mandates, our two institutions will be better able to contribute to the economic and cultural growth of our respective regions without the often debilitating requirement of reliance on the resources, programming and priorities of other institutions; the needs of our regions and the capacity of our institutions will be the only factors determining both programming choices and delivery models.



If granted this new status, RDC and GPRC will begin with the granting of three degrees that have

a long history of successful enrolment, delivery and graduate employment in both institutions:

- Bachelor of Education
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Bachelor of Commerce / Bachelor of Business Administration

We have attached documentation around funding and enrolment in these three programs at each of our institutions.

GPRC has embarked upon an Institutional Self-Study for CAQC and RDC is continuing with its work in preparation for degree granting. Both institutions have conducted a revision of academic policies with the goal of strengthening our ability to offer degrees.

We request that Innovation and Advanced Education endorse and support our two institutions to approach Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) with our proposal for degree granting approval under Polytechnic University status. We also ask that, if approval is gained, there be an announcement in each of our stewardship regions within the next twelve months, and that, within three years, there be a transfer of operational funds from the current parchment granting universities to RDC and GPRC. Finally, we ask that within three to four years our institutions be permitted name changes that reflect this new status.

## Grande Prairie and Region Education Gap

Post-secondary education impacts Alberta's society and economy on a national level. The post-secondary education system prepares a highly skilled workforce, diversifies Alberta's economy, and contributes to the well-being of citizens. Alberta has invested in the post-secondary education system to compete on a national and international level. Despite the investments, statistics show that the post-secondary education gap between regional divisions and Alberta remains.

The post-secondary educational attainment levels of Grande Prairie city and Grande Prairie Census Division 19<sup>iii</sup> compared to Alberta presents a wider challenge for the city and the region. The National Household

Survey of 2011 indicates that only **9.0%** of Grande Prairie’s population aged 15 and over, holds a university degree, compared to Alberta’s provincial average of **14.5%**.

A further comparison between Census Division 19 and Alberta indicates **7.6%** of Division 19 population aged 15 and over, holds a university degree while Alberta’s provincial average is **14.5%**.

*Post-Secondary Education Gap (NHS 2011 - Age group: 15 years and older)*

University Degree	Percentage
Alberta	14.50%
Grande Prairie Division 19	7.6%
Grande Prairie City	9.0%

University Degree or Above	Percentage
Alberta	20.9%
Grande Prairie Division 19	10.2%
Grande Prairie City	11.5%

Immediate transition to, and enrolment in, a post-secondary institution by students within the Grande Prairie region is significantly lower at **18%** than the **33%**, **32%**, and **28%** of Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge respectively.

To eliminate these degree attainment and high school to post-secondary transition gaps, GPRC needs to provide accessible and quality degree programming that fulfills Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education’s outcomes framework of:

- A Learner Enabling System
- Value for Investment
- Advancing Knowledge

## Demand for Regional Degrees

GPRC currently offers students the opportunity to complete four-year degree programs at GPRC in the following areas:

- Bachelor of Education (Elementary)
- Bachelor of Science, Nursing
- Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of Social Work
- Bachelor of Arts (Psychology)
- Bachelor of Management

In addition, GPRC offers the following university transfer programs:

- Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of Education
- Bachelor of Engineering
- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Fine Arts
- Bachelor of Music
- Bachelor of Kinesiology

- Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology
- Bachelor of Science
- Bachelor of Science in Computer Science

Enrolment at GPRC indicates that the Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and Bachelor of Education degree programs are highly sought. If given this new “Polytechnic University” status, GPRC will commence with the granting of these three degrees.

A recent report<sup>iv</sup> by Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse, in collaboration with Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), states the benefits of university degree delivery in Northwest Alberta:

- Students can maintain closer connections to family, peers and community.
- The cost of postsecondary education will be less than the cost of attending a university “in the south” of Alberta.
- Students have time to mature before dealing with the challenges of urban life.



- Students will likely achieve greater academic success because of smaller class sizes and extensive academic and social support.
- Students can gain work experience in local communities.

*60% of GPRC university transfer students indicated a preference for a GPRC’s granted degree, while 67% preferred the opportunity to complete their degree at GPRC, regardless of who granted the parchment.*

GPRC recently conducted a university programming survey of all GPRC students. **60%** of GPRC university transfer students indicated a preference for a GPRC’s granted degree, while **67%** preferred the opportunity to complete their degree at GPRC, regardless of who granted the parchment. In addition to offering the three degrees mentioned above, statistics show high demand for Bachelor of Arts (Psychology), Bachelor of Arts (Sociology), and Bachelor of Science (Human Sciences) programs.

The city of Grande Prairie, now the **fifth largest city** in Alberta, having surpassed St. Albert and Medicine Hat, has experienced a tremendous population increase over the past twenty years. In contrast to other cities, Grande Prairie’s population has increased by **134%** since 1994 (See Appendix II), making it the fastest growing city in northern Alberta. Though Lethbridge has experienced a slower population growth compared to Grande Prairie, it has an established university offering degree programs.

## Population Increase and Post-secondary Enrolment

Grande Prairie is the farthest city from any university in Alberta. Indeed, Grande Prairie is **458** kilometers away from the University of Alberta, and **538** kilometers away from the University of Northern British Columbia.

Grande Prairie Census Division 19 declared Alberta's fourth largest Census division (Population of 158,735, Campus Alberta Planning Resource 2014). The population is projected to increase by **18.1%** (187,419) in the next ten years. Grande Prairie serves more than **350,000** citizens that include:

- Alberta's northern region (population of 253,266, Census 2011) that includes Census Divisions 16, 17, 18, and 19.
- Northwestern territories (population of 41,462, Census 2011)
- British Columbia Peace River Regional District (Population of 60,082, Census 2011)
- British Columbia Northern Rockies Regional District (Population of 5,578, Census 2011)

In addition to the regional population increase, the 2015 Grande Prairie Municipal Census revealed that the population of the Grande Prairie city have increased by **25%**, from **55,032** in 2011 to **68,556** in 2015 (See Appendix II).



Regional high school to post-secondary transitions rates and post-secondary participation rates of the Grande Prairie region are relatively low in comparison to those of Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Grande Prairie's 2012-2013 high school to post-secondary transition rate of **34.5%**, and high school completion rate of **69.9%**, are second and third lowest in Alberta respectively (See Appendix II).

Post-secondary participation in Alberta hovers around **17%** to **19%** - a **6%** difference from the national average of **24%**.

Grande Prairie, the hub and largest populated city of the northern region, must address the needs of the regional learners by providing accessible programming. A "Polytechnic University" in Grande Prairie will reduce the regional post-secondary education gap, increase post-secondary participation rates, and provide access to thousands of regional learners currently seeking degree completion elsewhere.

## Migration for Degrees

*“The overall population increases and the increases in the primary post-secondary cohort are concentrated within the urban service regions of Edmonton and Calgary. This follows a global trend towards increased urbanization, and reflects the increasing enrolment levels among urban post-secondary institutions. Growing urbanization in Alberta mirrors a global trend as people migrate to cities for economic and educational opportunities. Migration toward urban centres may translate into higher demand for seats at post-secondary institutions within these communities, and less demand in rural areas.” (Campus Alberta Planning Resource, 2014)*

Many Grande Prairie regional learners are migrating to the larger urban centres of Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Calgary for post-secondary education. Students who must complete a degree away from home spend, on average, **\$28,000** more than those who complete a degree while living at home.

GPRC potentially loses an average of **1,688** Full Load Equivalents (FLE) each year to other universities and colleges in Alberta.

In 2013-2014, the total number of FLEs of Census Division 19 learners enrolled in other post-secondary institutions represented **85% (1,676)** of total FLEs in GPRC. GPRC, with total FLEs of **1967** in 2013-2014, could potentially increase its FLE count to **3,000** over five years, if GPRC retained approximately **200** FLEs every year (See Appendix II).

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GPRC also offers a broad slate of university transfer programming. FLEs in transfer programming account for roughly **30%** of the total FLEs attending GPRC.

### GPRC Programming FLE

Program Type	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
University Transfer	617.452	583.578	562.985	558.688
Other	1,396.379	1,345.524	1,390.402	1,408.879
% University Transfer	31%	30%	29%	28%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,013.831</b>	<b>1,929.102</b>	<b>1,953.387</b>	<b>1,967.567</b>

By offering degree programming, GPRC will retain current university transfer students, and enroll other regional students who currently relocate to larger urban areas for post-secondary education.

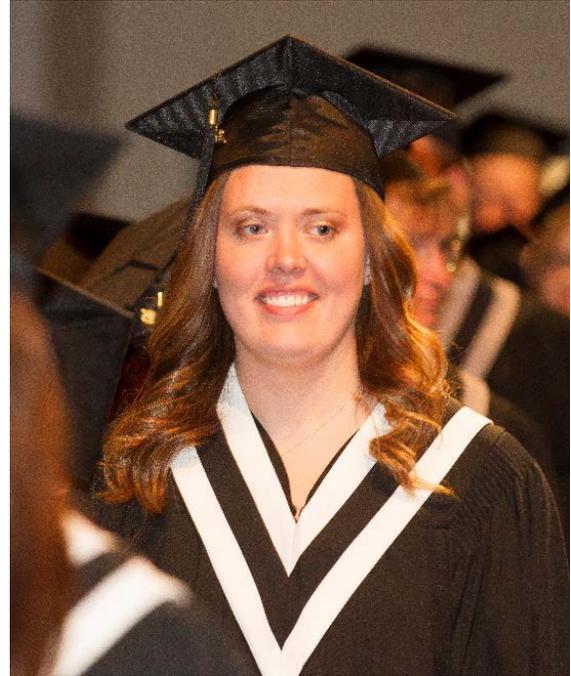
## A Degree Leads to Higher Employment and Income

The relationship between post-secondary education levels and graduate income have long been researched and studied across the world. Multiple studies conclude that higher levels of post-secondary education lead to higher levels of income and employment, and a lower probability of unemployment. Although the immediate expectations and outcomes of post-secondary education are higher employment and income, many of the rewards are nonmonetary. Post-secondary education graduates are healthier, are more engaged citizens, and face fewer periods of unemployment over their lifetime.

A recent 2013 report<sup>v</sup> by Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour indicates that between 2002 and 2012, employment increased by **58.9%** for people with university degrees and only by **29.8%** for those with post-secondary diplomas or certificates, while employment for those with less than a high school education decreased by **2.4%**. Statistics Canada shows an increased employment rate of **7.8%** for citizens aged 25-44 with a Bachelor degree over post-secondary certificate or diploma (See Appendix II).

Consequently, one observes a positive correlation between higher levels of education and employment rates and income in Alberta. Comparing Canadian provinces, Alberta, in 2013, had the **highest median weekly income** (See Appendix II) for Bachelor degree holders<sup>vi</sup>.

Frenette (2014)<sup>vii</sup> analyzed a twenty-year period of financial gains of Canadians from their mid-



30s to their mid-50s. He concluded that the earnings premium in 2010 dollars, associated with a bachelor's degree (compared to Canadians with a high school diploma) over the 20-year period was **\$443,000** for men and **\$280,000** for women. For a college certificate, the premium was **\$155,000** and **\$115,000** for men and women respectively. This indicates that the earnings premium associated with a university degree is **186% (\$288,000)** more than a college certificate over the 20-year period for men and **144% (\$165,000)** more for women (See table below).

	Men			Women		
	High school diploma	College certificate	Bachelor's degree	High school diploma	College certificate	Bachelor's degree
	<b>2010 constant dollars</b>					
Total cumulative earnings	\$975,323	\$1,222,334	\$1,707,340	\$524,627	\$703,817	\$972,869
Present value of total cumulative earnings	\$628,364	\$783,599	\$1,071,624	\$331,373	\$445,923	\$610,516
	<b>Number</b>					
Years covered by an employer-sponsored pension plan	9.5	11	10.7	7.2	9.6	11.5
Years employed	18.8	19.1	19	17.2	17.8	18.5
Years in a union	7.6	8	8.2	5	9.1	10.8
Permanent layoffs experienced	0.9	0.8	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.3
Temporary layoffs experienced	2.6	1.5	0.5	2	1.5	1.1

## Costs to Learners and Communities

The total amount of student loans in 2010 reached a staggering **\$15 billion**, the legislative ceiling set by the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act. This amount does not include provincial loans, line of credit, private sector debt, or personal loans.

Reductions in government funding for post-secondary education have caused an increase in student fees. In 1990, the average undergraduate student paid **\$1,271** for tuition, equivalent to **\$1,993** in 2013. In 2013, the average undergraduate student paid **\$5,772**<sup>viii</sup>.

A recent 2011 TD Economics report<sup>ix</sup> concluded that the average cost of an undergraduate degree is **\$55,000** for students living at home and **\$84,000** for students living away from home. The projected cost of an undergraduate degree in year 2030 will be **\$102,286** for students living at home and **\$139,380** for students living away



from home. The findings and data do not include private sector debt incurred by students funding their own post-secondary education. The average debt upon graduation for those with federal debt is over **\$28,000**<sup>x</sup>.

Student loans have discouraged potential students from applying and attending post-secondary

education, causing an increase in debt aversion. Students from marginalized communities and lower income background, as well as single parents are more likely to not attend post-secondary education, particularly outside their hometown<sup>xi</sup> because the burden of government loan poses the risk of future financial instability.

## GPRC Readiness to Grant Degrees

GPRC has an established reputation of offering university level programs, including full degrees on GPRC campus. With campuses in Grande Prairie, Fairview, and West Yellowhead, GPRC has the facilities, infrastructure, and reserve land for expansion to support the “Polytechnic University” transition.



Additionally, GPRC has an outstanding and qualified faculty across the Department of Sciences, Department of Arts and Education, Department of Nursing, and the Department of Business. GPRC’s faculty represents:

- 16 PHDs and 6 Masters level in the Department of Arts and Education
- 10 PHDs and 6 Masters level in the Department of Science
- 25 Masters level in the Department of Nursing

- 2 PHDs and 9 Masters level in the Department of Business

GPRC, a top 20 Applied Research College in Re\$earch Infosource Inc.’s October 2014 rankings, has been active in Research and Scholarly Activity on the provincial and national level.

GPRC researcher lead NSERC and industry funded initiatives are Pollutants-to-Products (P2P); and the National Bee Diagnostic Centre – Technology Access Centre. Emergent initiatives include: low impact systems, and a community based research initiative in partnership with the RCMP and Community Agencies. Priority areas for GPRC include the Neuroscience Laboratory and Nursing Education and Health Studies. Emergent projects include: biomass technology development (AROWRN); Unmanned Vehicle System technology integration; and product development applied research (under the Innovation – Technology Commercialization) banner.

Grande Prairie community, partners, and industry leaders have expressed their profound interest in GPRC’s desire to pursue the “Polytechnic University” status for many years. See support letters below from our regional leaders in supporting GPRC’s commitment in obtaining the “Polytechnic University” status.

## Financial Costs of Degree Programs

Financial Services analyzed potential degree program costing of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Bachelor of Commerce, and Bachelor of Education. The financial costing assumes FLE enrolment, direct, and indirect costs for a three-year period.

*Program Cost per FLE*

<b>Program</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>
Bachelor of Education	\$ 14,895.64	\$ 13,085.85	\$ 13,408.92
Bachelor of Commerce	\$ 15,333.97	\$ 15,219.11	\$ 14,546.80
Bachelor of Science, Nursing	\$ 29,402.31	\$ 30,769.84	\$ 31,781.18

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## Appendix I

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<sup>i</sup> Ken Coates, “This is Canada’s Polytechnic Moment,” *Globe and Mail*, June 26, 2013.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/this-is-canadas-polytechnic-moment/article12807397/>

<sup>ii</sup> Marc Frenette, “Too Far to Go On? Distance to School and University Participation,” Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Analytical Studies Branch, Research Paper no. 191. [2002].

[http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/statcan/research\\_paper\\_analytical\\_11f0019-e/no191/11F0019MIE2002191.pdf](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/statcan/research_paper_analytical_11f0019-e/no191/11F0019MIE2002191.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Census Division 19 includes: Beaverlodge (Town), Berwyn (Village), Birch Hills County (Municipal Census), Donnelly (Village), Duncan's 151A (Indian reserve), Fairview (Town), Fairview No. 136 (Municipal Census), Falher (Town), Girouxville (Village), Grande Prairie (City), Grande Prairie County No. 1 (Municipal Census), Grimshaw (Town), Horse Lakes 152B (Indian reserve), Hythe (Village), McLennan (Town), Peace No. 135 (Municipal Census), Peace River (Town), Rycroft (Village), Saddle Hills County (Municipal Census), Sexsmith (Town), Smoky River No. 130 (Municipal Census), Spirit River (Town), Spirit River No. 133 (Municipal Census), and Wembley (Town)

<sup>iv</sup> Demand for Degree and Applied Degree Programs in Northern Alberta

<http://www.nadc.gov.ab.ca/Docs/clearing/CH88.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Employment and Wages for Alberta Workers with a Post-Secondary Education

<https://work.alberta.ca/documents/employment-and-wages-with-post-secondary.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Income Advantage for University Graduates (<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/education/incadvan-university.aspx>)

<sup>vii</sup> An Investment of a Lifetime? The Long-term Labour Market Premiums Associated with Post-secondary

Education (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2014359-eng.htm>)

<sup>viii</sup> The Impact of Student Debt (<http://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/03/Report-Impact-of-Student-Debt-2015-Final.pdf>)

<sup>ix</sup> Post-secondary education is the best investment you can make

[http://www.td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/sf0911\\_education.pdf](http://www.td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/sf0911_education.pdf)

<sup>x</sup> The Impact of Student Debt (<http://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/03/Report-Impact-of-Student-Debt-2015-Final.pdf>)

<sup>xi</sup> Student Debt in Canada- Education shouldn't be a debt sentence (<http://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/11/Factsheet-2013-11-Student-Debt-EN.pdf>)

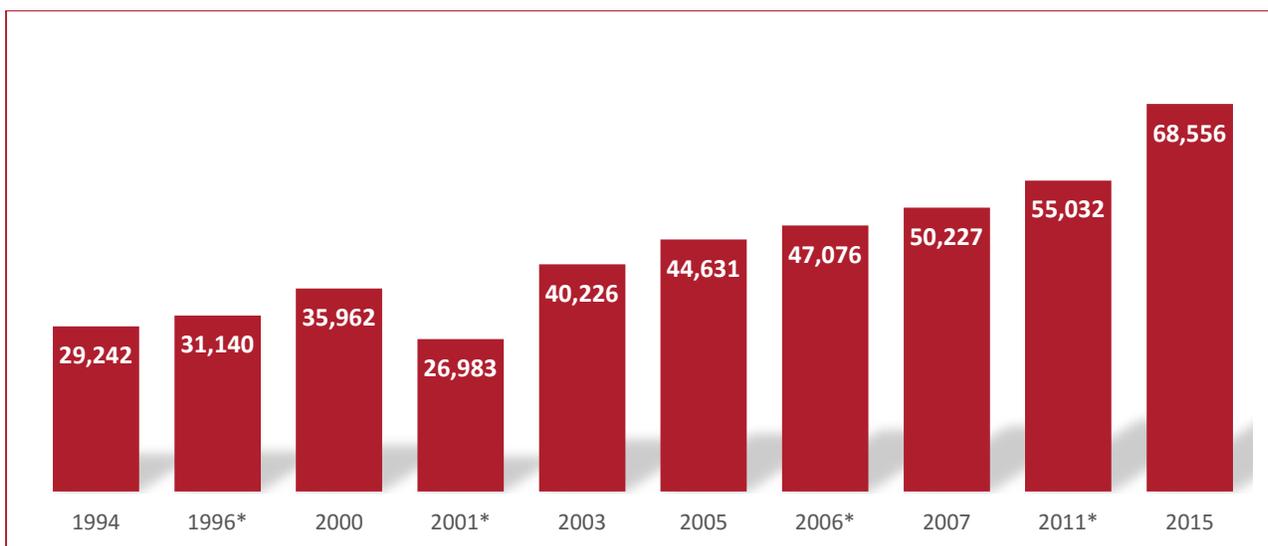
## Appendix II

### 1. Population by City

Municipality	1994	1996	1999	2000	2003	2005	2007	2015
Grande Prairie	29,242	31,140	31,140	35,962	40,226	44,631	50,277	68,556
St. Albert	44,195	46,888	49,243	49,243	51,716	56,318	56,318	63,255
Red Deer	59,826	59,834	63,940	65,701	70,593	77,669	85,702	100,807
Lethbridge	64,938	64,938	68,712	68,712	72,717	79,082	81,692	94,804
Medicine Hat	45,892	46,783	50,152	50,152	51,249	56,048	56,048	63,018

Source: Grande Prairie Municipal Census 2015

### 2. Grande Prairie Municipal Census Population



\*Federal Census

### 3. Completion and Transition Rates

Criteria	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
High School Completion rate (Within 3 years of entering grade 10)	70.8%	70.3%	69.9%
High School to Post-secondary Transition Rate (4 year)	34.1%	36.0%	34.5%

2014 Grande Prairie Regional Profile (IAE)

### 4. Census Division 19 to Other Post-secondary Enrolment

Criteria	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Census Division 19 Learners registered at Other Post-Secondary Institution in Alberta	1725.674	1634.342	1,716.723	1,676.293

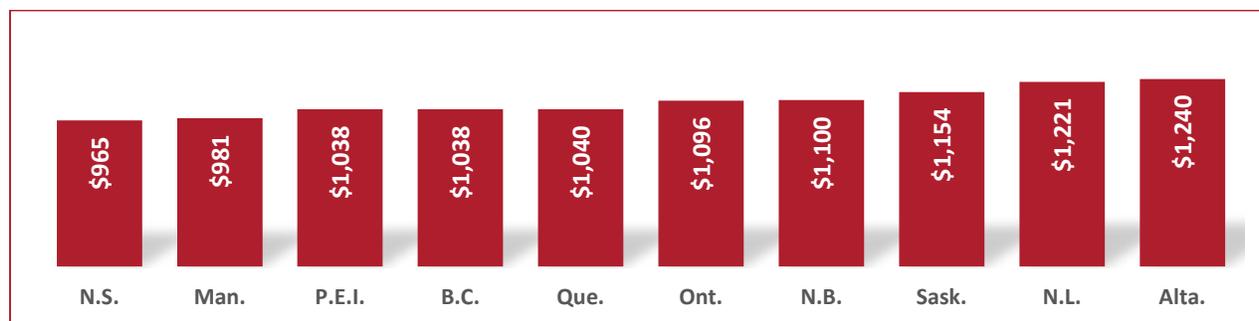
Source: Data Collection and Reporting (IAE)

### 5. Employment by Educational Attainment

	2014		
	Both sexes	Men	Women
	%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>57.6</b>
15 to 24 years	55.5	54.2	56.9
25 to 44 years	81.4	85.3	77.5
45 and over	50.8	56.1	45.8
High school graduate	60	66.7	53.2
15 to 24 years	63.7	64.7	62.4
25 to 44 years	75.8	81.9	68
45 and over	50.8	58.1	44.7
Postsecondary certificate or diploma (Includes Trades Certificate)	70.2	73.3	67.1
15 to 24 years	77.8	76.6	78.9
25 to 44 years	86	89.6	82.3
45 and over	58.2	61.3	55.1
Bachelor's degree	73.9	76	72.2
15 to 24 years	71.8	70.6	72.6
25 to 44 years	85.6	89.1	83
45 and over	61.8	64.7	58.9

Source: Statistics Canada

### 6. Weekly Median Income by Province



Source: Conference Board of Canada



## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

October 19, 2015

Grande Prairie Regional College  
10726-106 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C4  
Attention: Don Gnatiuk, President & CEO

**RE: Degree Granting Status at Grande Prairie Regional College**

Dear Mr. Gnatiuk:

As the youngest City in Canada, with more children from 0-5 than adults 65+, education opportunities for youth are vitally important to our community. As such, Grande Prairie Regional College is a vital part of our City and region.

As you likely know, it was in 1956 when the Grande Prairie School District called on the Minister of Education to establish a post-secondary institution in our community. Interestingly, this was two full years before Grande Prairie attained City status in 1958. I bring this up because I believe it speaks to the visionary nature of the people of this region.

In response to the needs and wishes of our citizens, City Council continues to advocate for the continued development of GPRC today. Because of our community's relatively remote nature and reflective of our position as the service and educational hub for just under 300,000 people, it is important that GPRC offer a wide variety of post-secondary programming.

The City of Grande Prairie believes it is time for the next step in the development of Grande Prairie Regional College. We would like to request you take all possible steps to attain degree granting status for the institution while maintaining your ability to meet the wider educational needs of the region.

We understand that the Polytechnic University model may offer the opportunity to do just that. City Council is fully supportive of any steps that are needed to move towards that status.

We would be pleased to assist in any way if we can be of service.

  
Mayor Bill Given



September 23, 2015

Grande Prairie Regional College  
10726 – 106 Avenue  
Office of the President  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C4  
**Attention: Don Gnatiuk, President & CEO**

**Re: Degree Granting Status at Grande Prairie Regional College**

Dear Mr. Gnatiuk,

The County of Grande Prairie Council passed a resolution at the September 21, 2015 Regular Council Meeting to provide a letter of support for degree granting programs through Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC).

The County is a member of the Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce who is a business advocacy and member-based organization that promotes economic development through promotion of their members and community. They annually survey members as to the issues that are important to their growth and success. One of the recurring areas of interest is advanced education; in particular, degree granting through Grande Prairie Regional College.

The County of Grande Prairie has a population base of approximately 20,347 but serves a regional trading area much larger than the population figures can capture. GPRC has expanded a number of its course options to meet the demand of a growing population. However, at this point in time the college cannot grant degree completion opportunities. The nearest centre offering degree programs is Edmonton, which is approximately 450 kilometers from Grande Prairie.

The advantages of being able to access degree programs in Grande Prairie would include social and economic benefits by giving potential students the option to stay at home instead of moving somewhere else to gain a degree. This would also allow GPRC to respond to the needs of the business community in a timelier manner. As well, it would encourage a broader population of students from other areas to have the option of moving to the Peace Region. It would also encourage workers who come to Grande Prairie for employment opportunities and to raise a family, by giving them a convenient educational option for their children.

The County of Grande Prairie fully supports and understands the necessity for degree program options at Grande Prairie Regional College. We sincerely hope this proposition is given serious consideration.



Thank you for your consideration on this matter,

Reeve Leanne Beaupre  
County of Grande Prairie No. 1  
/ao

CC: Honourable Margaret McCuaig-Boyd, MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace  
Mr. Wayne Drysdale, MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti  
Mr. Todd Loewen, MLA for Grande Prairie-Smoky  
Mr. Eric Rosendahl, MLA for West Yellowhead  
Mr. Bill Given, Mayor of the City of Grande Prairie  
Mr. Dale Gervais, Reeve of the Municipal District of Greenview No. 16  
Mr. Cody Beirsto, Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce, Chair of Board  
Council File



Box 189,  
FAIRVIEW, ALBERTA  
T0H 1L0

Email: [mdinfo@mdfairview.ab.ca](mailto:mdinfo@mdfairview.ab.ca)

PHONE: 780-835-4903  
FAX: 780-835-3131

September 28, 2015

Honorable Minister Lori Sigurdson  
Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education  
404 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Honorable Minister Sigurdson,

**Re: Grande Prairie Regional College  
Polytechnic University Status Application**

Please find attached a Notice of Motion from the Municipal District of Fairview No. 136 in support of Grande Prairie Regional College obtaining Polytechnic University status.

Grande Prairie Regional College is a highly valued and respected member of our community and the northwest region of Alberta. Through the programs offered by GPRC, students in our Northwest Alberta Region have the opportunity to obtain quality post-secondary education while remaining close to home, supported by family and friends. However, students wishing to attain a university degree must leave our area and incur exceptional education expenses leading to much higher student loan burden. In many cases, this financial burden deters students from following their dreams and developing their skills. Students that are able to pursue degrees in the larger centers often do not return to our region of the province which poses a challenge for the growth and sustainability of our communities.

Council of the Municipal District of Fairview No. 136 strongly supports GPRC in their desire to obtain Polytechnic University status. As outlined in the many points of our Notice of Motion, students and communities in our region would greatly benefit by a post-secondary institute of such calibre close to home. We believe Grande Prairie Regional College, with their solid history, large service area and proven successes, has the potential to be that institute for Northern Alberta.

We are pleased to support Grande Prairie Regional College in their application for Polytechnic University status and as always, look forward to the provision of enhanced opportunities in Northwestern Alberta.

Sincerely,

Reeve Ernie Newman  
Municipal District of Fairview No. 136

Cc: Honorable Minister Marg McCuaig-Boyd, MLA Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley Constituency  
CC: Mr. Don Gnatiuk, Grande Prairie Regional College, President and CEO

Notice of Motion  
Submitted by Reeve Ernie Newman  
**Support for Grande Prairie Regional College in Obtaining Polytechnic University Status**

Whereas, Grande Prairie Regional College is actively seeking Polytechnic University status in order to offer its own degrees, as well as to offer professional, career-focused programs in the arts, social and related behavioural sciences, health & wellness, engineering, education, and trades and technology that engage students in active, applied learning and research essential to the future of society, business and industry; and

Whereas, offering degrees closer to home dramatically improves access and affordability for learners in the communities of Northwestern Alberta, and

Whereas, a local Polytechnic University will provide local control over education programming, based on local demand and our communities' needs; and

Whereas, a local Polytechnic University will provide a breadth of programming that provides choices to Northwestern Alberta Students, and

Whereas, in a recent survey, 60% of Grande Prairie Regional College University Transfer students expressed a strong interest in completing Grande Prairie Regional College's own degree; and

Whereas, Grande Prairie Regional College with its 2 campus' and 3 learning centres draws students from a regional population of approximately 130,000; and

Whereas, a Polytechnic University will strengthen the social fabric of our Northwestern Alberta communities, increase cultural diversity, and enable economic growth for the region; and

Whereas, applied research that is anticipated from Polytechnic University will support innovation and commercialization for businesses and industries of Northwestern Alberta, which further helps to diversify and strengthen our economy; and

Whereas, Grande Prairie Regional College's current contribution to economic growth through past graduates and current operations is \$139.4 million in 2011-2012, and would be significantly higher with a Polytechnic University; and

Whereas, our region is one of the largest in Canada without access to a degree granting institution within a 5 hour commute; and

Whereas, students who must leave home to complete a degree incur costs of \$28,000, on average, more than those who complete a degree while living at home; and

Whereas, Grande Prairie is the largest city between Edmonton, Alberta and Fairbanks, Alaska; and

Whereas, Grande Prairie was the fastest growing city in Canada between 2001 and 2006; and

Whereas, currently only 18% of eligible High School students in Grande Prairie region remain here to pursue a post-secondary education, compared to Calgary (33%), Edmonton (32%) and Lethbridge (28%); and

Whereas, students who must leave our Northwestern Alberta communities to pursue a degree often do not return; and

Whereas, economic strength and diversification are crucial to Council's Strategic Plan; and

Whereas, education and lifelong learning, influences community equity positively, reduces poverty and crime, improves social justice and positively influences the overall well-being of the community; and

Whereas, the purpose of civic government is to improve the quality of life for its citizens; and

Whereas, The Municipal District of Fairview No. 136 has an opportunity to support and advocate on behalf of, and with, our communities' local educational institutions; and

Therefore, be it resolved that the council of the Municipal District of Fairview No. 136, endorse and advocate with the Grande Prairie Regional College in its request to the Government of Alberta for an immediate change in status to a Polytechnic University.

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#### References:

*Today and tomorrow, Canada's post secondary system has to align itself much more closely with the current and future needs of Canadians and the rapidly shifting national and international economy. We need responsive, specialized and career-ready programs and much greater engagement of applied researchers with the business community. For Canada to succeed economically, we need people with the skills that business and government require and research that moves quickly from the laboratory bench to the marketplace. Polytechnics play precisely these roles and have the potential to do even more as full partners in the Canadian postsecondary landscape. (Ken Coates, "This is Canada's Polytechnic Moment," 26 June 2013)*

*There are obvious reasons why distance to a university creates an obstacle to greater postsecondary participation: the costs of moving and living away from home are too high, the emotional costs of leaving family and support networks are too high, and students living at a distance from a university may not perceive the benefits of attending one. Frenette notes also that students who relocate to attend university are more likely to incur higher student loan debt than their counterparts who can attend a university while living at home (Frenette). 1 Frenette, Marc. "Too Far to Go On: Distance to School and University Participation." Business and Labour Market Analysis Division, Statistics Canada. 2002.*

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Founded</i>	<i>City Population when Founded</i>	<i>2014 Population of City</i>
<i>University of Alberta</i>	1908	18,500	877,926
<i>Mount Royal College</i>	1910	40,000	1,195,194
<i>SAIT</i>	1916	60,000	1,195,194
<i>Lethbridge College</i>	1957	29,462	93,004
<i>NAIT</i>	1963	303,756	877,926
<i>Red Deer College</i>	1964	24,446	98,585
<i>University of Calgary</i>	1966	323,289	1,195,194
<i>University of Lethbridge</i>	1966	37,186	93,004
<b><i>Grande Prairie Regional College</i></b>	<b>1966</b>	<b>11,129</b>	<b>60,000 Regional Population 130,000</b>
<i>Grant MacEwan College</i>	1971	436,264	877,926



## TOWN OF FAIRVIEW

P.O. Box 730, Fairview, Alberta T0H 1L0  
Provincial Building, 101, 10209 – 109 Street  
Phone: 780-835-5461 Fax: 780-835-3576  
Email: [reception@fairview.ca](mailto:reception@fairview.ca)  
[www.fairview.ca](http://www.fairview.ca)

October 15, 2015

Grande Prairie Regional College  
10726 - 106 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C4

Attn: Don Gnatiuk, President and CAO

**Re: Degree Granting Status - Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC)**

Council of the Town of Fairview, at regular meeting held September 15, 2015, unanimously passed Motion #091515 11.1 in support of GPRC's bid for polytechnic university status.

GPRC is very important to the North Peace Region and the GPRC Fairview Campus is particularly important to our community. Since a great deal of provincial resources are provided out of northern Alberta, it follows that we need to provide exceptional post-secondary education for our students. University degree provision is a natural progression. Currently, distance and cost may deter students from pursuing the top level education they need and deserve. Further, we would like to see highly educated students remain and pursue their careers in the north. This would benefit our region, the province and the nation as a whole.

With a regional population of 130,000, it is imperative that university education is provided in northern Alberta. We trust those who will be making this decision will favorably consider this application.

Yours truly,

Gordon MacLeod  
Mayor

copy: Honourable Marg McCuaig-Boyd, MLA Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley  
Constituency



# TOWN OF HINTON

October 30, 2015

Grande Prairie Regional College  
Mr. Don Gnatiuk, President and CAO  
10726 – 106 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C4

**Re: Degree Granting Status – Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC)**

Dear Mr. Gnatiuk:

Town of Hinton citizens identified in the Hinton Community Sustainability Plan (CSP) the need for post-secondary education to be offered locally. The CSP was adopted by Council on May 17, 2011. In the plan, it states: "With no permanent post-secondary institution, we can't offer the full menu of training and apprenticeships that would allow students to fully prepare right here for jobs with our largest employers."

At this time, GPRC offers Hinton residents a limited number of opportunities to further their education. In this regard, Hinton Town Council supports GPRC's bid for polytechnic university status. Being a rural community, this could reduce the distance and cost for students pursuing a higher level of education that they need and deserve, giving them the opportunity to remain in Hinton to pursue their careers. Hinton is a regional hub drawing from eastern BC, Jasper, Grande Cache, and Edson so we support this drive for GPRC to gain degree-granting status so that students in our region have more opportunity to attain their post-secondary goals.

If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

ROB MACKIN  
Mayor, Town of Hinton

\*wla

Honourable Lori Sigurdson  
Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education  
404 Legislature Building  
10800 – 97ave.  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

October 15, 2015

Dear Minister Sigurdson:

**Re: Degree Granting Status at Grande Prairie Regional College**

The Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce is a business advocacy and member-based organization that promotes economic development through promotion of our members and our community. We annually survey our members as to the issues that are important to their growth and success. One of the recurring areas of interest is advanced education: in particular, degree granting through Grande Prairie Regional College.

The city of Grande Prairie has a population base of 68,556 but serves a regional trading area of approximately 260,000 people. GPRC has expanded a number of its course options to meet the demand of a growing population. However, at this point in time the college cannot grant degree completion opportunities. The nearest centre offering degree programs is Edmonton, which is approximately 450 kilometres from Grande Prairie.

The advantages of being able to offer degree programs in Grande Prairie would include social and economic benefits by giving potential students the option to stay at home instead of moving somewhere else to gain a degree. This would also allow GPRC to respond to the needs of the business community in a timelier manner. As well, it would encourage a broader population of students from other areas to have the option of moving to the Peace Region. It would also encourage workers who come to Grande Prairie for employment opportunities and to raise a family by giving them a convenient educational option for their children.

The Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce fully supports and understands the necessity of Polytechnic University status for Grande Prairie Regional College. These opportunities fall in line with comments and requests made by our member businesses. We sincerely hope this proposition is given serious consideration.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cody Beirsto', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cody Beirsto, Chair of the Board

CC Mr. Don Gnatiuk, President & CEO, Grande Prairie Regional College

October 28, 2015

Don Gnatiuk  
President  
Grande Prairie Regional College  
10726-106 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 4C4

Dear Don:

On behalf of Grande Prairie & District Catholic Schools, strongly support your College's application to become a Polytechnic University. I have long advocated for GPRC to become a degree granting University while still holding tight to the demands of the trades in the area.

When I heard that GPRC was planning on pursuing Polytechnic university status, I was proud of the College's quest to fulfill this dream. Our community needs this opportunity, and our College and community is ready for this opportunity.

If there is anything else that I can do to support this application please let me know.

Warmest Regards,



Karl Germann  
Superintendent of Schools

cc. Susan Bansgrove, Vice President Academics & Research



## Grande Prairie Public School District #2357

10213-99 Street  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 2H3  
Phone: 780.532.4491  
Fax: 780.539.4265

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October 30, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

**RE: Letter of Support for Grande Prairie Regional College Application to  
Advanced Education**

Please accept this letter of support from the Grande Prairie Public School District for the Grande Prairie Regional College application to Advanced Education to pursue polytechnic university status.

By allowing the Grande Prairie Regional College to attain polytechnic university status, students could receive undergraduate degrees in areas such as Education, Nursing, Business and Arts in Grande Prairie. This would allow students living in the immediate area the opportunity to stay close to home, and those living outside of the area a closer alternative for postsecondary education.

The Grande Prairie Public School District is a growing District, one of the fastest growing school districts in Alberta. As a reflection of this growth we will be opening three new schools in the next two years alone – we need teachers.

A new hospital for the region is being built right beside the College – we need nurses.

The Grande Prairie Regional College is a collaborative partner in Education with our District and the polytechnic university status would further meet our District's needs.

GPRC is a first class organization that we are proud to partner with.

Sincerely,

Carol Ann MacDonald  
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Susan Bansgrove, GPRC Vice-President of Academics and Research





Grande Prairie Regional College  
10726 106 Avenue, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 4C4  
[gprc.ab.ca](http://gprc.ab.ca)