

Keyano College Land Trust Announcement

Honourable Jeff Johnson

Minister of Infrastructure

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Check against delivery

Good morning.

It's great to be here today for this exciting announcement.

First, I want to thank President Dr. Kevin Nagel for hosting today's event.

I also want to thank Mayor Melissa Blake for being here today.

And my colleague, Minister of Advanced Education, Greg Weadick.

Looking around the room, there are also many other people I want to recognize ...

[municipal councilors, members of Rotary Club, etc.]

(pause)

This is a certainly an exciting day for Keyano College and the entire community of Fort McMurray.

We're here today to announce the launch the Keyano College Land Trust ... an endowment that will fund a new trades and technology centre for the college.

This is a bold and innovative idea that our government is proud to support.

Premier Redford has said time and time again that we're looking for new ideas and bold thinking.

And that's exactly what we see here today.

(pause)

Deputy Premier Doug Horner created the land trust last fall, and we're now taking the final step by officially signing off on the transfer of land from the College into the Land Trust.

Everyone at Keyano College should be congratulated for thinking outside the box and coming up with a creative idea that will be a real benefit to the College.

Other post-secondary institutions ... colleges and universities around the world... have long-term endowments in place.

It's a real milestone for Keyano, and it's one that our government is more than pleased to support.

(pause)

As exciting as this is for Keyano, I'm just as excited about what it means for Fort McMurray.

The housing that will be built on this land is much-needed in Fort McMurray.

As everyone knows, this city has transformed beyond recognition in the past ten years.

The Community has adjusted well to huge growth in population and prosperity.

A lot of this is thanks to the ingenuity, resilience and creativity of the men and women who call Fort McMurray home.

Some of Fort McMurray's most passionate residents are sitting on City council, and organizations like the UDI and the Chamber of Commerce.

These men and women dedicate countless hours to finding solutions to enable this city to grow.

They've thought outside the box in a thousand ways to come up with solutions to meet growing demands, and manage the impacts of oil sands development.

But we know there are still challenges, and one of the biggest is the need for more land for residential and commercial development.

For all the good work that has been done, it's clear that without added space to grow and expand, this community can't reach its full potential.

(pause)

Today is the first step our government plans to take in the coming weeks and months to support the community by making more land available.

A lot of good work is already underway.

The first phase of the Parsons Creek area is under construction, with as many as 2,500 residential units being built right now, and the first units becoming available this summer.

As well, we sold nearly 1,000 acres in 2011 in the Southlands area for commercial and industrial use, and development is scheduled to begin on that property later this year.

These are all good steps, but more is needed.

And more is coming.

(pause)

We have a two-part plan to make more land available for residential, commercial and industrial space in Fort McMurray.

The first part is to release more land, right away, to industry, private ownership, and developers.

This will mean more houses built, more stores for people to shop in, and more space for businesses to grow.

More land development will also help stabilize housing prices and make Fort McMurray a more affordable community.

The second part of the plan is to fulfill our commitment to create a long-term land bank for the municipality.

Creating an Urban Development Sub-region was a key part of the agreement our government signed with the municipality last summer. We plan to meet that commitment.

Fort McMurray needs to be able to do its own long-term planning, so it can reach its full potential and become a sustainable and affordable place to live.

Or as the Premier has said ... not just a boomtown, but a hometown.

Your elected council is in the best position to decide where to build new neighbourhoods, accommodate new retail shops and services, and support the growth of secondary industries to diversify the local economy.

This land bank will allow the municipality to release land and be in charge of its own urban planning.

To me, that's the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

The people of Fort McMurray deserve to guide their own community's growth and development.

(pause)

Conclusion:

Ladies and gentlemen, it's a banner day for Keyano College and all of Fort McMurray.

This post-secondary institution has come a long way in the past decades.

And today, we've given it a clear path to the future.

The people of Fort McMurray should be very proud of this institution, and its vision, passion, and bold thinking.

And they should be equally proud of their community and how has grown.

As a government, we want to support Fort McMurray's continued growth.

Today is great news ... and there's more good news to come.

So stay tuned.

Thank you to everyone for coming, and to everyone at Keyano for your hard work in organizing today's event.