

# North Wind Wellness Centre Society

*An Indigenous-Led Initiative*

director@northwindwc.ca

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March 4, 2026

**Mr. Shawn Dahlen**

Chief Administrative Officer  
Peace River Regional District  
1981 Alaska Avenue  
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H8

**Re: Repurposing the Site C Worker Accommodation – An Invitation to Co-Create an Indigenous-Led Vocational Training Centre for Northeast BC**

Dear Mr. Dahlen,

I am writing on behalf of North Wind Wellness Centre Society to introduce a revised proposal that we believe can deliver lasting economic, social, and workforce benefits across the Peace River Regional District. We are proposing to repurpose BC Hydro's Site C worker accommodation facility as an Indigenous-led vocational training centre, focused on producing graduates in healthcare, hospitality, trades, early childhood education, and other sectors where every municipality in the region faces persistent workforce shortages.

Our focus on vocational training reflects engagement with the provincial government and a pragmatic assessment of what can be achieved within current fiscal realities. The original concept for the facility – a centre of excellence in mental health and addictions – was found by the BC Ministry of Health to be too complex and costly in the near term. Rather than abandon the opportunity, we have reframed the initiative around workforce development. This model directly addresses the healthcare staffing crisis that Northern Health's CEO described to this Board in March 2025 – a 42 per cent nursing vacancy rate in northern emergency rooms – while also providing pathways for refugee and newcomer integration and supporting individuals in recovery to transition into stable professional employment.

We recognise that the Regional District comprises communities with distinct needs and priorities, and we have designed this proposal to deliver tangible benefits across the region. Fort St. John and Taylor would benefit directly from graduates trained in healthcare, hospitality, catering, and construction trades – the occupations local employers consistently struggle to fill. Dawson Creek, as the location of the PRRD's administrative offices and Northern Lights College's main campus, would be a natural partner in program delivery and clinical placement coordination. Hudson's Hope, which has borne much of the direct impact of Site C construction over the past decade, deserves to see a productive legacy from this infrastructure rather than seeing it sent to landfill. Chetwynd and Tumbler Ridge face their own healthcare access and workforce challenges that trained graduates could help address and Pouce Coupe, where North Wind Wellness Centre Society is already building a facility with support from CMHC, BC Housing, Streethome, Northern Health, and the First Nations Health Authority, would benefit from an expanded network of services and employment opportunities connected to the training centre.

Critically, this initiative is designed to serve and benefit the Indigenous communities of Treaty 8 Territory. The centre would provide 227 training places annually for Indigenous students, offering healthcare and trades education close to home so that students can maintain their family and community connections while they train. The governance model is Indigenous-led, and the curriculum would integrate cultural safety and traditional healing knowledge alongside recognised provincial credentials. This advances the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 19, 23, 24, and 92, and represents a meaningful step toward self-determination in workforce development. We want to work closely with Treaty 8 First Nations – including Doig River, Blueberry River, Halfway River, Prophet River, Forth Nelson, West Moberly, and Saulteau – to ensure the centre reflects their priorities and creates genuine opportunities for their members.

The urgency of this matter will be familiar to you. The Regional Board has been rightly concerned about the prospect of this \$470 million asset being demolished and sent to the North Peace Regional Landfill, and the Board's resolution requesting that BC Hydro not dispose of the structures in regional landfills was an important statement of principle. Our conversations with BC Hydro have confirmed that, despite receiving expressions of interest from over one hundred parties, no third party has yet committed to acquiring or relocating the facility. Several industrial groups have explored the possibility, but none have followed through. BC Hydro is carrying out its own feasibility assessment on whether relocating the facility for its own future purposes is practical. The camp remains operational until the end of March 2026, but without decisive action, the window for repurposing will close permanently.

We want to be clear about our approach: we are not presenting a finished plan and asking for endorsement. We are inviting the Regional District and its constituent municipalities to work with us and our partners to co-create a viable and sustainable solution. The partners we have assembled bring considerable capability. BC Hydro's Trade Training Centre has expressed interest in expanding its training operations to the north. Compass Canada, one of the country's largest food services and facilities management companies, wants to develop a training centre at the site for its own operational staff. ISSofBC, British Columbia's leading immigrant settlement agency, would provide wraparound services for newcomers. Northern Lights College, the University of Northern British Columbia, and First Nations University of Canada are all reviewing the proposal and have indicated interest in exploring a potential partnership as long as it does not impact on their current programs. We see this as an initiative that must be shaped collaboratively, drawing on the knowledge and priorities of local government, educational institutions, health authorities, employers, and Indigenous communities.

To be equally clear about what we are asking for at this stage: we are **not** requesting any capital or financial commitments from the Regional District or its member municipalities. What we need is a Provincial Order in Council directing BC Hydro to retain the facility and enter into negotiations for its transfer, rather than proceeding with demolition. We are asking the Regional District to support this request by passing a resolution calling on the Province to issue the Order in Council, and by encouraging its constituent municipalities to do the same. We are also asking for a letter of support presented to the BC Hydro Board requesting consideration of our proposal and a six-month due diligence period during which we can complete a detailed facility condition assessment, finalise partnership agreements with educational institutions, and develop a comprehensive business case – all at our own expense. If the due diligence does not demonstrate viability, the facility can still be decommissioned. But if we do not secure the Order in Council now, the opportunity will be lost before it can be properly evaluated.

At full capacity, the centre would generate over \$80 million in annual economic activity flowing through the regional economy, create more than 460 permanent staff positions, produce 1,125 trained graduates each year for the regional workforce, and achieve 91 per cent revenue self-sufficiency by Year 5. The financial model projects an ongoing government subsidy of \$7.8 million – a fraction of what it would cost to deliver equivalent training, settlement, and recovery services through separate programmes.

We would welcome the opportunity to present this proposal to the Regional Board and to discuss how we can work together to shape it into something that genuinely serves Northeast BC. I have enclosed a summary presentation for your reference. Please do not hesitate to contact either myself or our Strategic Development Consultant, Mukhtar Latif, to arrange a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

**Isaac Hernandez**  
Executive Director  
North Wind Wellness Centre Society

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**cc:** Chair Brad Sperling, Peace River Regional District Board  
Mayor Lilia Hansen, City of Fort St. John  
Mayor Darcy Dober, City of Dawson Creek  
Directors, Peace River Regional District Board

**Encl:** Site C Workforce Training Centre – Summary Presentation

**Contact:**

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