

*The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) met in Slave Lake, AB, November 13 and 14, 2008, for its regular administration meeting and Regional Stakeholders Forum.*

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## Dinner Meeting

Pearl Calahasen, MLA for Lesser Slave Lake welcomed the NADC to her constituency along with Mayor Karina Pillay-Kinnee who gave welcoming remarks on behalf of the Town of Slave Lake.

An evening dinner was held with the Town of Slave Lake. Mayor Pillay-Kinnee and Town Manager Betty Osmond provided council with an overview of the opportunities and challenges in Slave Lake. Mayor Pillay-Kinnee highlighted the importance of branding the north.

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## Regional stakeholders presented on topics including education, tourism, economic development and housing.

**Education:** The impact of education and the need for continual improvement is a key issue. Council heard presentations from the Youth Apprenticeship Program, Northern Lakes College, and Alberta-North Post Secondary Institution Society. Northern colleges want to be students' first choice when considering their post-secondary options. Enrolments are increasing but research is also being conducted into ways of better attracting and retaining students. By providing services, students remain in the north, provide much needed skills to businesses, and contribute to the economic development of the region.

The NADC is meeting with Northern Lakes College and following up with the need for a new school in Gift Lake.

**Tourism:** The importance of tourism to the region was expressed and an overview of Travel Alberta North, a destination marketing organization designed to promote tourism, and the Lesser Slave Lake Economic Alliance Society was provided to Council. Material has been developed using local talent to promote the region.

The NADC is active in the Deh Cho Travel Connection and is working with St. Paul in a pilot on tourism development.

**Economic Development:** Concern was expressed regarding the economic development of the Municipal District of Opportunity No. 17, and the western Métis Settlements. There is considerable activity in the surrounding area, but more broad consultation and inclusion in the regional planning process is needed.

The NADC is working with the MD and has passed on concerns to the Oil Sands Secretariat about the lack of inclusion of surrounding areas.

**Housing:** The need to keep seniors living in their homes longer was discussed along with suggestions to re-fit seniors homes with the necessary upgrades to make this possible. Off-reserve housing remains an issue for Métis students. Many spend up to 80 per cent of post-secondary funding on housing.

The NADC is working on a best practices in affordable housing study, expected to be completed by March.

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## NADC Updates

*Next Council Meeting:*

- Whitecourt – February 5 & 6, 2009.

*Northern LINKS Program Changes:*

- Changes to the Northern *LINKS* program have been made to align it with the vision of graduating students from high school and keeping them in the north. Northern *LINKS* continues to support Student Liaison/ Mentors and Skills Competitions. Campus Tours are no longer funded. New projects include Entrepreneurship Ventures, DARE, and a pilot Aboriginal Workplace Placement Initiative. Communities that have traditionally used *LINKS* funding will be the focus of the new programs.

*Saying Goodbye:*

- Roxanne Heinen is moving on to other opportunities in Peace River. We wish Roxanne the best in her future endeavours!