

MEDIA RELEASE

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Province invests \$600,000 in NIC aquaculture program

Aquaculture diploma to be developed in cooperation with local industry

MARCH 23, 2017 – NIC will receive \$600,000 to develop an aquaculture diploma at the Campbell River campus, BC Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training Shirley Bond announced today.

"Agrifood, including aquaculture, is an important contributor to the provincial economy and one of the key sectors in the BC Jobs Plan," said Shirley Bond, BC's Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training. "That is why I am pleased we can respond to the request from employers for more advanced-level aquaculture training to support their industry growth. This aquaculture Sector Labour Market Partnership project with North Island College and seafood industry partners will help us meet critical sector labour needs."

The Aquaculture Technician Training diploma will be one of BC's first advanced production training programs in the field. The program was developed in cooperation with the BC Salmon Farmers and BC Shellfish Growers Association, who represent the majority of BC's aquaculture producers. They have identified a need for more specialized staff as the range of species grown across the sector expands.

"BC's aquaculture industry is worth more than \$1 billion to the BC economy, generates more than 5,000 jobs and has a very bright future," said Jeremy Dunn, of the BC Salmon Farmers Association. "Demand for BC farm raised salmon has never been higher and this funding is crucial to allowing BC to meet the demand while hiring well-trained staff, providing specialized, species-specific training and sustaining the industry for years to come."

NIC has offered Level 1 Aquaculture Technician Training since 2014, with the first class of Level 2 students expected to graduate in 2018.

The \$600,000 announced today will allow NIC to develop curriculum over three years for Level 3 and 4 Aquaculture Technician Training at the Campbell River campus, with the eventual creation of an Aquaculture Technician diploma by 2019.

NIC instructor, Dr. Jesse Ronquillo, a multi-award winning aquaculture scientist, educator, researcher and extension worker in the aquaculture field, will develop the curriculum in collaboration with industry.

"We want to thank the BC Salmon Farmers and Shellfish Growers Associations," said Randall Heidt, NIC's Vice President of Strategic Initiatives. "It's only fitting NIC will develop this BC's first production focused aquaculture diploma here on the North Island, with North Island students, employers and communities."

Heidt also thanked Minister Bond for her continued support.

"We appreciate Minister Bond's innovation in allowing us to access the Labour Market Partnership funds," said Heidt. "NIC is proud to be able to be one of BC's first post-secondary institutions to receive funding from this program."

Funding for the program is provided by the Canada-BC Labour Market Development Agreement.

For more information, visit www.nic.bc.ca.

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