

Local company wants to cut worker shortage off at the pass

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A partnership between NB Power and a local research company could help address a future worker shortage at the utility.

NB Power has about 700 employees working at the Point Lepreau Nuclear Generating Station, but in five years that number could change due to retirements, job changes and transfers.

The corporation employs approximately 2,400 workers at plants and offices throughout New Brunswick.

"We are taking a proactive approach to addressing possible future shortages in the workforce," said Joanne Callahan, chief learning officer for NB Power.

NB Power has partnered with the Centre for Nuclear Energy Research, a non-profit company owned jointly by the University of New Brunswick and the Research and Productivity Council at UNB.

The partnership will focus on attracting workers to the nuclear industry and filling employment needs, preparing new nuclear energy workers while enhancing the skills of current employees and the advancement of nuclear energy research.

The Centre for Nuclear Energy Research promotes nuclear energy research and education in New Brunswick, said general manager Andy Justason.

He said he understands the workforce challenges facing NB Power and is confident the Centre for Nuclear Energy Research can help address the potential for workforce shortages.

"NB Power needs to be able to attract and retain qualified workers in all areas of power generation," Justason said.

He said New Brunswick is competing with other provinces for workers and this partnership could give NB Power the edge.

"We'll help recruit students to UNB and those in the faculty of engineering will be assisted by NB Power in terms of summer and part time jobs," Justason said.

"This is the type of work experience that will help those students decide that New Brunswick is the place to live and work."

Callahan said the corporation's ultimate goal is to have access to a work-ready workforce by 2012.

"CNER is key to helping us reach that goal," she said.

"CNER is an integral part of the Canadian nuclear community and we are pleased to partner with them on this important initiative," said Gaetan Thomas, vice-president of NB Power Nuclear. "The nuclear industry remains an important part of our generation in New Brunswick."

Thomas said the refurbishment outage at Point Lepreau will take place in April and will extend the operation of the station for an additional 25-30 years.

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