

Government of Alberta News Release

"This is a recognition that delivering instructional programs is a core business of school boards."

Gary G. Mar

Minister of Education

Distance Learning Services Transferred To Local School Board

Alberta Education will transfer the instructional services of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) to Pembina Hills Regional School Division (RSD) effective June 2, 1997. This is part of the department's plan to focus on its core businesses, and to support the role of school boards providing direct services to students.

The ADLC, formerly the Alberta Correspondence School, provides provincial distance learning services to about 14,000 students in grades 1 through 12. The Centre provides services and programs to home educated students, students who cannot attend regular classrooms and adult learners upgrading their education. The main operations are in Barrhead and a storefront service is in Edmonton.

"This divestiture has been part of government's business plan for education since 1994/95," said Gary Mar, Minister of Education. "It is not a cut to education students and boards will see no change in instruction or services. It will be business as usual."

Alberta Education will continue to design, develop and produce distance learning courses, and distribute course materials. The department remains responsible for monitoring distance learning along with all education delivery in the province. The Pembina Hills RSD will share the Barrhead facility and provide teaching and support services for distance learners.

There are 64 ADLC staff members who will be affected by this transfer 7 managers, 29 teachers and 28 people in support positions including 6 on wages. Those who are interested have the opportunity to take up new positions with Pembina Hills RSD. "We want to continue to build on the good reputation and work of ADLC and its reputation for excellence," said Siegfried Schmold, Superintendent of Pembina Hills RSD.

Pembina Hills RSD's location in Barrhead and its involvement in distance learning made it the ideal candidate for providing ADLC instructional services. Pembina Hills RSD operates 18 schools in the Barrhead, Westlock, Clyde and Swan Hills areas. The jurisdiction also offers the unique Vista Virtual School, a co-operative project of the jurisdiction and the ADLC. This is a new concept in teaching that delivers grades 1-12 programs by computer, using e-mail and the Internet.

"We are committed to putting the needs of students first," said Schmold. "We will continue our on going discussions with boards around the province to maintain the quality and availability of distance learning in Alberta."

Funding for the operation of the ADLC will be increased for the first year following the transfer. The ADLC budget, currently \$4.75 million, will increase to \$5.1 million in 1997/98, and will be \$4.75 million in 1998/99. The increase in funding will assist Pembina Hills RSD with one-time only costs associated with the transition such as equipment and technology replacement and upgrading to improve program delivery.

Initial discussions began with Pembina Hills RSD in 1995. An agreement in principle was signed by Pembina Hills RSD on January 27 this year and ratified by the board at a public meeting in Barrhead on January 29.

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Divestiture of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) **"same courses - same place - same commitment"**

What's new?

- Instructional services of the ADLC, formerly the Alberta Correspondence School, will be transferred to Pembina Hills Regional School Division effective June 2, 1997.

What's the same?

- Alberta Education will continue to provide distance learning program development and design, as well as course material production and distribution.
- Students will continue their lessons without any interruption or change in the quality of service provided.
- Costs of tuition and course materials will remain the same.
- The ADLC will continue to serve the same student groups, including students in home schools, students from the North West Territories, and adult students.
- ADLC will continue to operate from its present location the main operations in Barrhead, approximately 120 km northwest of Edmonton, and a storefront service for students on the main floor of the Devonian Building, 11160 Jasper Avenue, in Edmonton.

Why Pembina Hills Regional School Division?

- Keeping the ADLC in Barrhead maintains the operations at the Barrhead facility and uninterrupted access to the services that Alberta Education will continue to provide. Relocation of instructional services to another community would have increased the cost of divestiture substantially.
- Transfer to Pembina Hills RSD will minimize the disruption to the community, to businesses and to employees and their families.
- The jurisdiction has experience in the distance learning field. It offers the unique Vista Virtual School, a cooperative project with the ADLC. This is a new concept in teaching that delivers programs for grades 1 to 12 by computer, using e-mail and the Internet. About 90 students from across Alberta are currently registered with Vista Virtual school.

Some History . . .

- Alberta Education first offered correspondence courses to students throughout the province in 1923/24.
- The Alberta Correspondence School relocated to Barrhead in 1983. It was renamed the Alberta Distance Learning Centre to reflect changes in the delivery of distance learning.
- Peak enrolment was 31,000 students in 1986/87.
- Current enrolment is 14,000 students.

Alberta Education Business Plan

The core businesses of Alberta Education includes:

- ensuring that high standards for education are established and communicated.
- developing and implementing legislation, policies and long-range plans for education.
- providing funding to school authorities on a fair and equitable basis, and controlling the cost of education.
- Assessing and reporting to government and the public on student achievement and the performance and cost of the education system.
- Since 1994/95, the department's business plans have called for the transfer or privatization of functions that do not reflect the core businesses. The instructional portion of the ADLC was identified as a service that should be transferred from government operations.

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