

BCCP KEY THEMES

for the triennium

2006 / 2007 to 2008/2009 fiscal years

a paper setting out the key themes that the BC College Presidents commend to the Ministry of Advanced Education for action under the provincial government's 2005 / 2006 budget

AN OVERVIEW

This paper presents six key themes related to building capacity in our communities. The BC College of Presidents (BCCP) recommends these matters to the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) for their action and support during this next triennium.

The BCCP is an association of the presidents of the province's six urban (metropolitan) community colleges, six rural (non-metropolitan) community colleges, one Aboriginal institute and the Justice Institute of BC with its mandate related to justice, public safety and human services education and training.

The BCCP is the public voice and advocate for these fifteen public post-secondary institutions. In this paper we refer to them collectively as "the community colleges."

The province of British Columbia has a sophisticated and effective system of public higher education. This sophistication and effectiveness demands continuous and careful attention to all of its parts if the system is to continue to provide to the level of education and training required to support a growing Provincial economy. Continuous and careful attention is also required to ensure that the province's citizens have the opportunities to learn and grow as citizens and as members of a highly skilled and educated workforce. Too often the needs of the citizens in the province's smaller communities lie in the shadows of the seemingly larger, more important needs of the urban areas. Yet, to ignore the small communities is to risk diminishing the contributions these communities make to the provincial economy and to deny the education and training services residents in more urban centers come to expect.

So it is that the BCCP reminds government that the province's community colleges are a natural and effective infrastructure, contributing to the economic and social capacity of communities, through which they can successfully pursue their goals of a province that is "the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent" and leading the way "in North America in healthy living and physical fitness."¹

¹ See the September 12, 2005, *Speech from the Throne*.

This paper identifies and briefly develops six themes that are parts of the infrastructure any government would need to achieve these goals. They are:

- Trades Training for a Skilled Workforce
- Applied Degrees Providing Skills for the New Work
- Applied Research and Innovation to Meet the Needs of the Local Economy
- Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education for Improved Participation of Aboriginal Learners
- University Studies and Joint Planning for consolidated, Province-wide Effectiveness in Arts & Science Education
- Budget and Accountability for Financial and Productivity Effectiveness

KEY THEMES

The order of these themes is not based on priority or assigned importance. They are all important and all need to be on the Ministry's priority list.

Trades Training for a Skilled Workforce

- AVED policy agenda, clear and congruent with the Ministry responsible for trades and vocational training (Ministry of Economic Development)
- AVED establish long-term trades training capital replacement program, providing minimum of \$200,000/year/institution
- Government create trades training expansion fund of \$20M

Applied Degrees Providing Skills for the New Work

- AVED ensure applied degree graduates are accepted by BC universities
- AVED work on trans-provincial accreditation process
- AVED revise policy that links applied degree approval to FTE productivity

Applied Research and Innovation to Meet the Needs of the Local Economy

- AVED support the BC Research and Innovation Strategic Plan proposal for the Regional Community Partnership Program.
- AVED establish a \$10M fund, spanning three years, to promote and develop applied research
- AVED prepare and implement a strategy that:

- facilitates collaborations between colleges, universities and industry directed at applied research and innovation initiatives;
- promotes within government the provision of tax or tax credit incentives for private sector organizations to engage in collaborations with colleges.
- encourages the provincial government to lobby the federal government to improve college and college faculty access to federal research funding sources.

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education for Improved Participation of Aboriginal Learners

- AVED continue its recent practice to annually increase the funds available
- That a base funding mechanism be established to which institutions can apply for ongoing support of ASPF initiatives
- AVED work with the ITA, the Trades Training Consortium, other trainers and the BCCP to have funding from the First Nations New Relationship Fund directed towards apprenticeship and trades training for First Nations.
- That the Government of British Columbia establish a bursary fund for BC Aboriginal students from low-income backgrounds; five five-thousand dollar bursaries, per year, per community college

University Studies and Joint Planning for Consolidated, Province-Wide Effectiveness in Arts & Science Education

- AVED use its good offices to ensure that universities in their efforts to discharge their productivity obligations do not effectively disenfranchise the college's Arts & Sciences programs.
- AVED's efforts should focus on enhancing and advancing Joint Enrolment Planning with the universities for the purpose of maintaining the viability of Arts & Science education in our local communities.
- AV ED obtain the universities' commitment that they will remove the uncertainty of university access for transfer students bearing the same qualifications.
- AVED work with the colleges to identify interim productivity standards that will preserve Arts & Science education in our local communities
- AVED develop and publicly declare a policy resolution that the current transfer system will be maintained as a jewel in the province's post-secondary system, and include the methods to facilitate the system.

Budget and Accountability for Financial and Productivity Effectiveness

- It is the BCCP's opinion that tuition fee caps and other similar restrictions, either by legislation or regulation, are not required to protect the students.
- AVED must fully fund all FTEs awarded to an institution, and the value of "fully funded" should bear a close relationship to the audited true costs for FTEs, on a program by program basis.
- AVED develop a means of including inflation in the block-funding system.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT: Investing in Colleges is Good Investment in Local Communities

The province's community colleges provide the province with an extraordinary return on the public dollars that the government invests in them. As our society moves deeper into the knowledge-based economy, with even the traditional industries based on picks and shovels having increasing recourse to modern technologies, an investment in education at any level, for people of any age, anywhere in the province is a good investment.

As government invests in people, the investment trickles down to the communities in which those people live. Our communities are then able to leverage this investment in the form of growth in their local economies, and thereby make a contribution to the strength of the province's economy as a whole.

The arguments for investing in our educational systems are well known² but bear repeating here in outline form.

1. For the individual, more education means either a better job or a higher income, and usually means both.
For society and government, higher incomes mean greater tax revenues.
So, education provides a positive rate of return for both citizens and government.
2. Of all those who benefit from more education, those who complete a high school diploma benefit the most. Adding a college certificate or diploma to a high school diploma offers the next largest return to individuals. And adding a degree to a diploma improves the return still further.
3. For government, the tax revenue exceeds the cost to the treasury, regardless of whether the earned qualification is a certificate, diploma or degree. Unless interest rates are extremely high, this rate of return exceeds the interest rate on money borrowed to invest in the education system.

It is the opinion of the BC College Presidents that the government should continue to invest in the provincial public colleges and institutes as a guaranteed means of contributing to the economic and social health of communities throughout the province.

² See for example "The Case for Investing in Education," by Robert Allen and published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC Office, March 1999.