



CHARTING *a new* COURSE 2.0

*Renewing Post-Secondary
Education in British Columbia*



Federation of
Post-Secondary Educators

Executive Summary

Post-secondary education plays a key role in the social and economic life of our province. At its most fundamental level, post-secondary education provides an opportunity for students to learn, create, research, innovate, but most of all, gain the confidence needed to sustain a commitment to life-long learning. At an institutional level, post-secondary education is a hub for both students and the community to gain access to new skills, greater collaboration and a more engaged citizenry. For many BC communities, these institutions are also major employers that provide good jobs and contribute to stable and sustainable economic growth.

While the benefits of post-secondary education are often well recognized, the interplay of effective public policy and funding to support and grow our post-secondary education system is not. Over the last decade, for example, the steady decline in real per-student operating grants—the provincial government’s most direct form of support for public post-secondary institutions—has dropped by close to 9%. The decline in funding has had a cascading effect on everything from affordability and access to program offerings and student debt.

FPSE is the largest organization in BC’s post-secondary education sector and represents the majority of faculty and staff employed in BC’s public institutions. From our inception over forty years ago, FPSE has maintained an active voice on post-secondary education policy issues. Our goal has always been to support and advance policies that ensure the greatest possible access to high quality post-secondary learning opportunities for every citizen in BC. We recognize that to achieve this goal FPSE needs to press governments—mostly the provincial government, but also the federal government—to implement policy and funding choices that strengthen both the opportunities for access as well as the quality and diversity of program offerings at our public institutions.

This document summarizes some of the major issues and challenges facing post-secondary education in BC. It details the significant policy, regulation, funding and program choices made over the last decade. It assesses the impacts of those choices. But most of all, it makes the case for the renewal of our post-secondary education system, a renewal that would increase access and affordability for students while ensuring that our institutions continue to provide a high quality learning environment for those students. We believe that by making the case for post-secondary renewal we can better position our institutions to reach their full potential. It is certainly not intended as the last word on how post-secondary

education can be improved. Rather, it is the starting point for a broader conversation with communities, students, families, faculty and administrators, all of whom have a vital interest in seeing post-secondary education thrive and succeed.

FPSE believes there is an urgent need for significant revisions to the policies and funding choices made over the last decade. Post-secondary education must play a critical role in building the future of BC, but that role has been undermined by changes made to the public system over the last decade, changes that have impaired both access and affordability. Public policy changes are needed and there is an opportunity to broaden the public debate that should precede a government commitment to implement those changes. Post-secondary educators want to play a critical role in designing those changes and participating in that larger public debate. To that end, we are encouraging the public to consider the following recommendations as part of dedicated plan for change in our post-secondary education system:

1. Improve funding, affordability and access by:
 - Setting a four-year budget target that leads to increases in real per-student operating grants to post-secondary institutions.
2. Strengthen BC's commitment to developmental education by:
 - Creating policy and funding options that support adult learners returning to post-secondary education.
3. Expand opportunities for English Language Training as well as increased international student support services at public institutions by:
 - Ensuring that new ELT programs, services and funding target public post-secondary institutions.
 - Providing additional funding mechanisms to ensure that our public post-secondary institutions have the capacity to provide additional student support services to the anticipated increase in international students that the Premier has cited in her provincial jobs strategy.
4. Change BC's system of trades training and apprenticeships by:
 - Reforming the Industry Training Authority (ITA) to ensure that all stakeholders, not just employers, are given an equal voice in the running of BC's trades training system. As well, re-align ITA's reporting mandate back to the Ministry of Advanced Education.

5. Advance the role of Liberal Studies and University Transfer programs by:
 - Strengthening the support and funding of Liberal Arts and University Transfer programs at colleges and special purpose and research universities in BC.
6. Effectively regulate BC's private post-secondary institutions by:
 - Introducing requirements that all private post-secondary colleges, institutes and language schools register with a reformed PCITA and that the new regulator is governed by a Board that includes equal representation for teaching faculty on its Board.
7. Establish better policies for recruitment & retention by:
 - Guaranteeing free collective bargaining throughout BC's public sector.
 - Re-balancing BC's labour laws to support greater unionization.
 - Establishing a more sustainable system of faculty supports to ensure that BC achieves the highest possible learning environments in every post-secondary institution.
8. Make BC post-secondary institutions leaders in technology, research and scholarly activity by:
 - Ensuring all post-secondary institutions have equal access to research funding and supports.
 - Improving the capital funding allocated to post-secondary institutions.
 - Providing greater support for faculty professional development.
9. Democratize and strengthen post-secondary governance by:
 - Amending the offending sections of Bill 18, the *Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act*, that bar faculty elected representatives from also serving on their local association executive.
 - Amending both the *University Act* and the *Colleges and Institutes Act* to prevent administrators from creating an imbalance in the faculty and administrative representation on Senates and Education Councils.
 - Ensuring that faculty representatives have an equal voice within every institution's governance structures as well as the province's degree granting process.

Introduction

In the mid-1990s, post-secondary educators, administrators, students and provincial government representatives worked collaboratively on a consensus approach to reforms within BC's post-secondary education system. The report produced by that initiative, *Charting a New Course*, formed the basis for both legislative and policy changes that had the full support of all stakeholders. A decade and a half later, it's time to renew that collaborative undertaking and build a new consensus for change within BC's post-secondary education system. The pressures of chronic under-funding, greater barriers to affordability for our students and a growing disconnect between faculty and their institutions over the standards and quality of programs all point to an urgent need to re-examine how our province supports post-secondary education and what reforms are needed to help put our institutions back on the right track.

This report is a first step by the Education Policy Committee of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE). It begins to identify the areas of reform that are most urgent. Committee members are convinced that over the coming months, as BC moves closer to the May 2013 provincial election, that a more informed public debate on the future of post-secondary education needs to move forward. Post-secondary educators have not only an opportunity, but also a responsibility, to be active participants in that debate. This document combines work done by FPSE and other organizations who share the view that post-secondary education is an important building block in a modern economy and a critical contributor to a more engaged citizenry.

Context for Renewal

Post-secondary education plays a key role in the social and economic life of our province. At its most fundamental level, post-secondary education provides an opportunity for students to learn, create, research, innovate, but most of all, gain the confidence needed to sustain a commitment to life-long learning. At an institutional level, post-secondary education is a hub for both students and the community to gain access to new skills, greater collaboration and a more engaged citizenry. For many BC communities, these institutions are also major employers that provide good jobs and contribute to stable and sustainable economic growth.

While the benefits of post-secondary education are often well recognized, the interplay of effective public policy and funding to support and grow our post-secondary education system is not. Over the last decade, for example, the steady decline in real per-student operating grants—the provincial government’s most direct form of support for public post-secondary institutions—has dropped by close to 9%. The decline in funding has had a cascading effect on everything from affordability and access to program offerings and student debt.

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FPSE is currently working with other organizations in the broader public education sector (K-12 and post-secondary) to ensure that there is an informed public discussion on education issues. It’s through this kind of public debate that all citizens will become more informed on the critical policy and funding issues in education. As well, that debate will help establish an appropriate context for evaluating what has happened in post-secondary education and what changes are needed to strengthen its capacity and potential.

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Why Post-Secondary Education Matters

Learning is a very personal experience. It involves a complex relationship between student and teacher, citizens and their government, institutions and the communities in which they operate. Learning can include the acquisition of skills. However, at a more fundamental level, it is an iterative process of inquiry that builds confidence in the pursuit of knowledge, insight and skills.

For adult learners, post-secondary education represents an opportunity to re-engage with learning in ways that move the process of inquiry and confidence building well beyond the levels achieved in primary and secondary education. The new level of engagement provides tangible benefits to the learner and the broader community.

In economic terms, post-secondary education is a further investment in human capital. Those investments lead to new skills and knowledge transfer which, in turn, support a higher lifetime income for the learner and increased productivity for the broader economy. A number of studies have documented the specific connections between higher learning and higher incomes. In its 2011 report *“Paid in Full”*, The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ Iglia Ivanova summarized the economic and social benefits of post-secondary education this way:

University education is an investment that pays off for both individual students and for society as a whole. The economic returns to higher education for individuals are typically measured as the difference between the earnings of university graduates and their peers with high school education only. Research has found that the returns to education are large and tend to be higher for women than men. A recent study by University of Montreal economist Brahim Boudarbat and his UBC colleagues Thomas Lemieux and Craig Riddell found that men with university education earned 40 per cent more on average than their high school peers in 2005 while university educated women earned 51 per cent more (after adjusting for job experience).

The same study found that the economic returns to education in Canada have increased since the early 1980s for both men and women, although slightly more so for men (8 percentage points for men and 6 for women). The increase in the wage premium for university education occurred despite the large increases in university enrollment over the last three decades, which increased the supply of graduates (and which some economists expected to reduce the economic returns to education).

Higher education is also associated with considerable social benefits that extend beyond individual graduates and their families. For example, innovation and knowledge creation are linked to a strong research and development sector, drawing

on the abilities of highly trained individuals. Formal education has an important role to play in developing the human capital needed by individuals and communities to succeed in the knowledge economy. It is not surprising that an educated and highly skilled workforce is widely viewed as a crucial element for the continued economic and social growth and development of BC and Canada.

While the social benefits to education are rarely quantified, UBC economist Craig Riddell's summary of the economic research on the topic concludes that "the non-market and social benefits of education appear to be substantial, perhaps as large as private market returns to education from higher lifetime earnings."

The gaps in annual earnings between university graduates and their high school peers across all workers are even higher than those observed among full-time, full-year workers (average employment incomes for all workers are shown in the Appendix). This is because post-secondary education is associated with better performance in the labour market (or more hours of work over the year) as well as a wage premium on each hour worked.

Despite the pervasive stereotype of English majors serving lattes at Starbucks, university graduates are more likely to be employed, to hold full-time jobs, and to experience shorter periods of unemployment when they are laid off than their peers with only high school diplomas.

The benefits of education go beyond increased job skills and earning potential; education provides people with the critical thinking skills they need to be active and confident participants in our communities, and in our democratic society. Better educated people participate more actively in their communities, have higher voter turnout rates and volunteer more. Moreover, studies show that educated people are, on average, healthier, that they experience lower rates of depression and mental illness, and report a higher degree of satisfaction with life even after accounting for differences in gender, age and income.

Beyond these direct benefits, post-secondary education as a sector is an important generator of economic growth. For example, a 2006 study of 13 BC colleges and institutes showed that these institutions created close to \$7.7 billion in income each year, an amount that equals over four percent of the provincial GDP (***Economic Contribution of BC Colleges: Analysis of Investment Effectiveness and Economic Growth***, 2007, CCbenefits Inc.). The report documented how these post-secondary institutions not only supported local employment, they also expanded new employment by providing students with the skills needed to secure new jobs and new careers. The report also showed that for every dollar invested by taxpayers in BC colleges and institutes, the provincial and local governments received \$3.80.

Why Post-Secondary Education Matters: The Case for University Transfer (UT) Programs

What is too often overlooked in the public debate about post-secondary education is the critical role that colleges and special purpose teaching universities play in advancing students through the public system. That role is particularly critical in the area of university transfer (UT). Through BC's well-designed articulation and transfer system—BC Council on Admissions and Transfers (BCCAT)—students within the public post-secondary system have their course and credit programs recognized across the public system, an arrangement that allows students to start their post-secondary education in one community and institution and complete their education at another.

In a policy update paper drafted for the Education Policy Committee in 2008-09 (*Condition Critical: University Transfer Programs in BC*), FPSE found that UT programs were particularly important for adult learners who were returning to post-secondary institutions to either complete their education or re-engage after leaving high school. The critical comparison highlighted in that policy paper showed that when compared to direct entry students who enrolled in research universities, transfer students had completion rates at research universities that were virtually the same as direct entry students even though the transfer students initially didn't meet the entry requirements for research universities.

Other key findings from the FPSE policy paper included:

- On average, BC research universities admit three transfer students for every five BC secondary school students (direct entry students).
- According to BCCAT, "given the diversity of transfer students—they are on average older, tend to have family commitments, and come from a wide range of academic backgrounds—these students perform impressively at university, graduating with an average that is only 5 per cent below the average of direct entry students."
- The research on transfer students shows that these students not only account for an important source of students for research universities, but also an important comment on openness and access for public post-secondary education in general. The majority of college transfer students, for example, were not admissible as direct entry students but, as a result of their college experience, were eventually able to enter a research university and complete their degrees— an outcome that would not have been possible without the system of transfers and coordination provided by BCCAT and the ability of colleges to provide high-quality learning environments for their students.

Collaboration, Innovation and System Change

One of the significant and too often understated features of BC public post-secondary education system is its capacity to innovate in ways that address both student and community needs. In areas like Developmental Education and Adult Basic Education, our public institutions have shown a keen interest in crafting programs that succeed on many levels, from outreach to under-represented groups to reconfiguring access and laddering within the post-secondary system in ways that acknowledge the many different paths to learning.

That commitment to innovation and collaboration is also tied to the mandates of local institutions, especially at the community college level. At that level, the emphasis on developing programs that bridge students to career, training opportunities or transfer to either special purpose teaching universities or research universities is a critical institutional focus.

The examples of just how that innovation and collaboration works is as numerous and varied as the public post-secondary institutions operating in BC. Listing those many examples would easily fill the rest of this document. Members of the Education Policy Committee have all cited institution specific examples of how that commitment to innovation, outreach and collaboration has played out at their institution.

At a provincial level, the issue of system-wide collaboration was the subject of a 2009 undertaking by the Policy Table, a joint initiative that was one of the outcomes from the 2007 round of post-secondary education bargaining. The Policy Table brought together representatives from FPSE, the BCGEU, PSEA as well as the Ministry of Advanced Education. The agreement was that this initiative would look at system wide issues with an eye to identifying how to strengthen capacities within the post-secondary system in ways that addressed access and innovation. A separate study was done by the Policy Table on collaboration. That study looked first at the inventory of collaborations that are on-going within the sector and then examined some of the impediments to that collaboration.

For the purposes of this document, the Collaboration paper provides the most comprehensive list of collaborations and innovations within our system. A copy of that final report is available on the FPSE website (http://www.fpse.ca/files/attachments/Collaboration_in_PSE.pdf). It's also important to note that a major finding in that report was the impact that funding had on collaboration. In effect, the study found that many of the most innovative and important collaborations were difficult to realize because of funding failures from the Ministry. Without that support institutions were forced to shelve some of their best efforts, an outcome that further limited the full potential of both the public system as a whole and the individual institutions that wanted those innovations to succeed.

Funding Pressures Force System-Wide Changes

Despite a 2001 election promise made by then BC Liberal party leader Gordon Campbell to protect education, his government's track record has been a major setback for education in general and post-secondary education in particular. Within months of taking office, Campbell reversed his pre-election pledge to not change tuition fees; his government opted, instead to de-regulate tuition fees, leaving public institutions to dramatically increase those fees. By 2005 tuition fees had almost doubled.

While tuition fee increases were the most dramatic evidence of his government's change in policy, other changes, equally as radical, also had major impacts on institutions, students and faculty. Some of the more critical impacts include:

- Starting in 2002 post-secondary institution administrators were given greater latitude in how they spent their provincial operating grants. The new discretion—referred to as “block funding” because it was a set amount based on estimated total enrolments—meant that administrators were no longer bound to advancing certain program priorities, a change that often left vulnerable program areas subject to cuts or closures.
- Real per-student operating grants from the provincial government declined over the decade despite the government's claim that absolute funding for post-secondary education has increased. Since 2001, real per-student operating grants have dropped by close to 9%. The decline reflects the fact that the operating grants are not keeping pace with core inflation and that the Ministry expects institutions to enroll more students without a corresponding increase in Ministry funding.
- Key program areas that have long been an avenue for adult learners both to access and complete a post-secondary education continue to face significant challenges. For example, enrolment levels in university transfer (UT) programs, which had been an important part of the program offerings of community colleges and university-colleges in the 1990s, continued to languish over the last decade as a variety of factors, including increased competition by established universities for students and budget-driven reductions in UT offerings at many colleges, combined to further erode enrolment levels. In the briefing document prepared by FPSE on the problems facing UT programs we recommended a number of changes that could alleviate the problems, but at its core the challenge for UT is related to the funding crunch that has dominated the post-secondary system for the last ten years.
- Similar problems exist in the area of developmental education. Under the block funding approach, the ability of local administrator to make significant program choices that effectively shut down developmental program offerings has continued to have a major impact. The recent experience at Capilano University is a case in point.

Support for developmental programs at that institution have been significantly reduced as the overall funding crunch coincided with administrators opting for programs that have the best prospects for high enrolment and low costs of delivery. Under these conditions, developmental education programs are extremely vulnerable.

The Public's Perception

The public has an enormous stake in post-secondary education. In sheer dollar terms, the \$2 billion budget of the Ministry responsible for post-secondary institutions ranks as one of the top five provincial program expenditures.

Obviously, the public's views on changes in the provincial post-secondary education system play a critical role in advocating for change within that system. In August 2011, FPSE contracted with Ipsos Reid, a nationally recognized polling firm, to gauge the public's assessment of post-secondary education. We wanted to find out if voters shared our concerns about conditions in our sector. The answers that came back were quite revealing:

- 55 per cent thought the BC government was doing a poor job handling post-secondary education in BC, confirming the view of many post-secondary educators who see major problems with the current government's approach to funding and policy in our sector.
- 87 per cent believe that tuition fees should either be frozen or reduced.
- 92 per cent agree that higher tuition fees make it harder for students from lower income families to get a post-secondary education.
- 84 per cent think that student debt is making it harder for students to complete their post-secondary education.
- 78 per cent agree that one way to improve the job prospects for young adults in BC is for the provincial government to invest more in public universities, colleges and institutes.

British Columbians think that the provincial government needs to do more to ensure that post-secondary education is more affordable and accessible for all.

- 73 per cent agree that increasing the access and affordability of post-secondary education is a good way to increase the number of high-paying jobs in BC.
- 83 per cent support the provincial government investing in programs that would help reduce student debt.

In many respects the public perceptions captured by this polling data reflect a view recorded in other polling done by various public and private organizations. For many years, that polling has shown majority public support for the services provided by government. In fact, in a number of instances, the polling questions have probed the degree to which the public recognizes and supports the link between the taxes they pay to government and the services they receive from government. In that context, it is clear that a majority of BC voters not only see the benefits of public services like post-secondary education, they also are prepared to support governments that will invest more in those services.

Emerging Issues

1. Learning Environments

Funding pressures at our public post-secondary institutions have done more than reduce access and undermine affordability for students. They have also affected the conditions that faculty face in their institutions, conditions that have a direct impact on students and the quality of learning opportunities available in each institution.

Funding shortfalls have often meant that faculty are using old or outdated technologies in their classrooms. As operational budgets fail to keep pace with inflation, post-secondary institutions are pressed to find ways to cut costs. Forgoing new purchases of classroom equipment is one of the most obvious targets for cost cutting. As a result, many program areas are forced to use equipment that should have been replaced much sooner. Even basic support equipment for faculty is often five to ten years out of date. That kind of deficiency undermines program quality and can erode faculty morale.

The funding pressures have also had a direct impact on faculty workloads. As administrators try to consolidate programs and reconfigure schedules and offerings to maximize the number of students enrolled in any given program, the pressure to increase workloads and teaching assignments also increases. The concern from a faculty perspective is that as the pressure increases to put more students through the institution without corresponding increases in faculty resources, the quality of an individual student's learning experience is put at risk.

Also overlooked in this push to "do more with less" is the impact that an increasingly diverse student population has on the learning experience in a classroom. Whether the diversity is based on language, culture, age or academic experience, the mix of students can, on its own, represent a major challenge for educators. Unfortunately, with the loss of

many student support services, the burden of dealing with that increased diversity falls more and more on to individual faculty members.

As well, the push to cut program costs to deal with funding shortfalls means that administrators look to new teaching platforms as a way to increase student counts without necessarily increasing institutional costs. Distributed learning is a major piece of this strategy and one that has not been clearly thought through by administrators because it can often lead to additional strains on faculty workloads as online students look for 24/7 contact with their instructor.

The funding crunch has also led many senior administrators to take a very narrow view of scholarly research and scholarly activity. More and more, faculty are finding that unless their area of study fits very specific criteria, access to institutional support for their scholarly activity is effectively denied. What these administrators fail to recognize is that scholarly activity encompasses a broad range of work, work that allows post-secondary educators to contribute to the knowledge base in their discipline and, at the same time, remain current in their area of interest.

2. International Education

BC's post-secondary education system has a long history of attracting and supporting international students. That history reflects a basic principle. Our public institutions and our domestic students both benefit from the diversity of having international students within our classrooms, labs and academic communities.

Over the last ten years, however, there has been a significant shift in how both institutions and the provincial government view international students and international education. The prevailing view today is that international education is seen as a significant new revenue stream for institutions. For most institutions, international student tuition fees are set at 3-4 times the fee for domestic students.

The provincial government has been a major proponent of increasing international education. In fact, when Premier Clark announced her Jobs Plan in September 2011, a major plank in that plan was her call to double the number of international students over the next five years. In advancing this plan, the Premier noted that international education is a major economic contributor to the BC economy because in addition to the higher tuition fees, international students also account for increased consumer spending while living in BC.

Lost in the enthusiasm for the revenue potential of international students is the fact that successfully incorporating these students into our institutions is a complicated undertaking, one that requires careful attention to their learning needs and learning challenges. Unfortunately, none of those challenges are taken into account by either administrators or the provincial government in their full cost recovery accounting.

International students have major language challenges. That, in turn, means more intensive English Language Training courses at our public institutions. International students also have diverse cultural backgrounds that need to be understood by both institutions and educators if the student is going to succeed. Both language and cultural demands translate into more intensive teaching assignments for educators, a change that neither administrators nor the provincial government seem prepared to acknowledge.

One of the consequences of “under-estimating” the real demands of international students is that BC’s post-secondary institutions run the risk of short-changing the quality of education that these students receive. That outcome could put the reputation of BC post-secondary institutions at risk; without the proper learning supports for international students in place, the pressure to simply “churn” students through the institution may increase, leading to instances where the international student is deemed to have succeeded in a program when in fact they have not. The most public example of this last point occurred at Douglas College where a Dean of an international program claimed that the College’s international program in China was passing students who had not successfully completed the program (Global News, January 23, 2012, “Dubious Degree”).

Similar concerns have been expressed about a range of programs here in BC. Some of the examples cited include arrangements between private language colleges and receiving public post-secondary institutions. The major concern here is the University Pathways program, a program that allows students from the private college to bypass the language competency test in the receiving institution. For educators at both the private college and the post-secondary institution the pressure to accommodate the student regardless of their language proficiency means that quality is sacrificed in the name of pushing more students through the system.

3. Governance

Over the last three years a number of new issues have emerged which pose serious challenges to faculty and to the underlying strength of our institutions. The most serious has been the combination of changes to university status and, with it, the rise of some troubling

trends in the governance of our institutions. In 2008, the provincial government announced plans to change five existing post-secondary institutions to “special purpose” teaching universities. The changes were made with no commitment to additional funding for the new universities. As well, the changes included legislative amendments that allowed local administrators to re-balance the governance structure of the new university Senates in ways that gave the administration majority control of the governance structure, a change that excluded non-management faculty and was a significant departure from the bi-cameral system that had been in place prior to the amendments.

Although the governance changes have varied from one institution to the next, the common theme through all of them is a steady erosion of faculty voice and input into the on-going operation of their institution. As well, the changes have had a de-stabilizing effect on labour–management relations at various campuses where Senates have threatened to amend standards or provisions covered by existing collective agreements. While this particular change in governance has serious implications for faculty and staff throughout the post-secondary education system, to-date the existing grievance and arbitration system has succeeded in pushing back against the most aggressive impacts brought by these changes. However, governance should never be used to as a battering ram in labour relations, a point that should have been acknowledged by the provincial government when it made changes to these universities in 2008.

Faculty concerns over these governance issues became urgent in the Fall of 2011 when the provincial government tabled Bill 18, the *Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act*. The legislation effectively bars a faculty member who is involved in their local faculty association executive from also standing for the position of faculty-elected representative on the Board of their local institution. The change is a direct attack on the Charter Rights of faculty members, a point that FPSE and the BCGEU have articulated in a court challenge of the legislation. That challenge was launched in June 2012 and is working its way through the court system.

4. Research and Scholarship

One of the challenges arising from the move to establish special purposed teaching universities is the exclusion of provincial research funding for faculty at these institutions. Coupled with that exclusion is the fact that many college and institute faculty face similar barriers to research funding.

For faculty at these institutions, the barrier to provincial research funding imposes limits on the extent to which those faculty members can advance in their academic discipline.

The inability to access provincial research funding has not prevented some within the excluded institutions from applying for and receiving research funding from other sources, but it has certainly made that process more difficult and the prospect of receiving research funding support more uncertain.

The exclusion from provincial research funding also has an impact on students. The prospect of working on research projects at either the undergraduate or graduate level is a major consideration for many students when they consider which institution they want to attend. If the opportunities for research work are either very limited or non-existent at an institution, it adds to the factors against enrolling at that institution. For faculty and the institution, have those opportunities foreclosed because of provincial policy only puts more pressure on the institution as the prospect of declining enrolments adds to the already difficult situation created by chronic under-funding.

The problem for faculty is also complicated by the narrow definition that some administrators put on research. There is a strong case to be made that the traditional view of pure research and scholarly activity is out of step with a more evolved view that recognizes the scholarship of teaching and the innovations needed to develop new curriculum and course materials. Unfortunately, many senior administrators take a narrow view of research and scholarly activity, a view that puts major constraints on faculty and fails to provide the kind of support that is needed.

Trades Training in Disarray

Trades training and apprenticeship programs are an important part of the public post-secondary system. Over 90% of trades training and apprenticeship programs are delivered by public post-secondary institutions. However, starting in 2002, the BC Liberals moved to make radical changes in that system. They began by dismantling the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) and replacing it with the Industry Training Authority (ITA).

The ITA was supposed to incorporate a so-called new model for trades training. The new model would more closely reflect the demands of employers for just-in-time skills rather than broadly based portable skills that had been the hallmark of the ITAC. The so-called new model also meant a massive revision in the relationship between post-secondary

institutions and the new ITA. Institutions were no longer seen as stakeholders in the trades training system. Instead, they were now viewed as “service providers”. Moreover, many of the important decisions dealing with funding of new or existing training programs were unilateral, with ITA dictating the terms and conditions of funding rather than working collaboratively with the public institutions.

By all the objective measures of performance, the ITA experiment has been a failure. Although registrations for apprenticeship programs increased over the period in which ITA was responsible, those increases never resulted in an increase in the number of apprentices completing their program. In fact, the completion rate fell by almost 40 per cent in the first four years of the ITA. It has since improved but still has not surpassed the levels achieved by ITAC. That shortcoming is in spite of a 30 per cent increase in ITA’s budget over that of the ITAC’s.

In November of 2008, BC’s Auditor General’s Office released a report assessing the ITA. The conclusion of the report was anything but positive. The Auditor General found many aspects of the ITA’s performance falling well short of acceptable standards. In one area of interest to those in the labour movement the report took issue with the ITA’s exclusion of important stakeholder input. The report noted that the labour movement has a long history of advocacy in the area of trades training, but has been effectively shut out when it comes to policy development and priority setting within the ITA.

The AG’s report also led to a re-aligning of ITA’s reporting mandate within government. Prior to 2008, the ITA was part of the Ministry of Economic Development. The report recommended that ITA move back to the Ministry of Advanced Education, a change that was fully implemented later in 2008. However, a subsequent re-organization in 2010 moved ITA out of Advanced Education and into the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation.

It makes no sense to have ITA report to a Minister other than Advanced Education. With over 90% of trades training programs delivered by public post-secondary institutions, a coherent approach would be to follow the 2008 recommendations of the Auditor General and realign ITA’s reporting mandate with the Minister of Advanced Education.

Private Post-Secondary Institutions: Problems with “Self-Regulation”

In 1992 the BC government introduced new legislation designed to set standards and oversight of the province’s private post-secondary institutions. Prior to this legislation, private institutions had been regulated in a number of different pieces of legislation. Part of the intent of the new legislation was to bring those regulations into a single overseeing body as well as strengthen the standards under which a private institution should operate in BC. The new legislation called for the establishment of the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC). The legislation also detailed the responsibilities and funding of this new agency. It included the following provisions:

- That every private post-secondary institution in the province must be registered with the PPSEC in order to operate as a post-secondary college, institute or training facility.
- That the application process for registration must include “evidence of a bond or other form of security”.
- That the PPSEC be governed by a Board that had, as its mandate, “to provide consumer protection”, encourage integrity and high standards of educational competence and implement a system of registration and accreditation “with fairness and equity”. Although it was not covered in the legislation, the government ensured that key stakeholders were represented on the 15-member Board. Those stakeholders included faculty representatives, students, Ministry officials and owners of private institutions.
- That a system for accrediting private institutions include outside experts.
- That a system within the PPSEC ensure that there was capacity to respond and investigate student complaints.
- That a fund be established to provide refunds to students in the event of a closure. The formula required an institution to provide 75% of the maximum amount of unearned tuition revenue held within a registration year. By March 31, 2001 the PPSEC held over \$49 million in trust assets. In 1999 an amendment was made to the Private Post-Secondary Education Act that allowed the PPSEC to set up a Tuition Assurance Fund (TAF). That fund would replace the formula cited above, however, an insurer was not found prior to subsequent changes in the legislation that were made in 2003.

In February 2002, the BC Liberals moved to replace the PPSEC with a new model of private post-secondary institution regulation. In 2003, the government tabled the *Private Career Training Institution Act* and it substantially altered the extent to which private post-

secondary institutions were regulated. The new legislation included the following changes in regulations, standards and governance:

- The legislation created a new agency, the Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA), governed by a Board of Directors that is disproportionately represented by private institutional management and/or owners. For example, seven of the ten Board appointees are from private post-secondary institutions. The only student representative is the current Director of Sales and Marketing at the North Shore News. There are no teaching faculty representatives on the Board.
- The previous requirement that all private post-secondary institutions must be registered was changed to allow this requirement to be more narrowly defined, a move that substantially reduced the number of institutions registered by PCTIA. As of February 2011, PCTIA records fewer than 400 institutions as registered. The comparable total recorded by PPSEC in its 2000/01 Annual Report was over 1100 institutions. It is important to note, as well, that the number of students enrolled in private institutions has increased significantly since 2001.
- The legislation gave the new Board of PCTIA responsibility for setting a Student Training Completion Fund. The legislation allowed this fund to be established as a fee collected from students. The legislation also prescribed the process that a student had to follow to make a claim for unearned tuition fees lost in the event of a closure. Unlike the coverage provided by the previous legislation, a claim can only be made against a registered institution. Because the PCTIA system does not require universal registration, students in non-registered institutions have no way of making a claim for lost tuition fees in the event of a closure.
- PCTIA's regulations limit the extent to which private post-secondary institutions are required to register with the agency. Their current bylaws state that only those programs that have a tuition fee of \$1,000 or more and more than 40 hours of instruction are required to be registered.

The legislative changes to regulating BC's private post-secondary education sector have significantly diminished the degree of consumer protection for students attending these institutions. As well, the governance structure of PCTIA lacks the needed balance to ensure proper regulation. The number of institutions not registered with PCTIA has risen dramatically, despite the significant growth in the number of students attending private post-secondary institutions in BC. And given the change in both scope and funding of the Student Training Completion Fund, there are serious questions about the extent to which the new model meets the "consumer protection" objectives spelled out in the legislation. It is interesting to note that many of the features of the former PPSEC have been adopted by the Australian government as they have moved in recent years to tightly regulate private post-secondary institutions in their country. Under the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act* Australian government regulators require that every private post-

secondary institution be registered and that as part of the registration process the institution must provide financial security to guard against any potential loss to students in the event of a closure.

Creeping Commercialization

The problems that first surfaced in the failures of the self-regulation model in PCTIA also became apparent in other aspects of the government's laissez-faire approach to post-secondary regulation. For example, during its first term in office the BC Liberals moved to dramatically restructure the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB). That Board makes recommendations to the Ministry of Advanced Education on applications for degrees (regular and applied), applications for exempt status (from the DQAB process) and applications to use the word "university". The DQAB is also tasked with assessing applications as to whether a new degree is required as existing degrees are revised.

The DQAB currently has very limited representation from faculty despite the fact that the Board's decisions are vitally important to the work of all faculty throughout the province. The DQAB, however, has significant representation from the province's business community, a fact that raises serious questions about the extent to which post-secondary education policy making is being led by a public interest or a business interest.

If there was any doubt about that imbalance and its impact on how priorities are shaped, one only has to look at the dramatic increase in the number of private and out-of-province applications for university status. These applications obviously draw on the time and resources of DQAB, a draw that many believe is detrimental to the public post-secondary system. Unfortunately, the government's push to attract private post-secondary institutions is driven more by a view to expand commercial opportunities and benefits than a desire to strengthen the quality of post-secondary education available in BC. As long as the balance is tilted in favour of commercial interests, the public interest is relegated to a lesser status, a move that FPSE believes disadvantages existing public post-secondary institutions and further undermines the principle of more access and opportunities for BC students.

A March 2011 review of the DQAB called for changes in the way the degree granting process works in BC. While the recommended changes include some of the reforms that FPSE has called for—including greater representation from faculty in the review process—the report leaves open the possibility that accreditation will become an established part of BC's public post-secondary education system. FPSE has argued that accreditation is both expensive and

unnecessary in our province because of the extensive and well-coordinated system of transfers and credit recognition that is the responsibility of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfers (BCCAT).

Recruitment, Retention and Labour Relations

One of the major strengths of BC's public post-secondary education system is its capacity to both attract and retain the faculty and staff needed to create and deliver high quality programs. In that respect, BC has benefited from its ability to attract the diverse talents of faculty from not just across Canada, but internationally as well.

However, demographic realities will put increasing pressure on BC's public post-secondary education system. Within the next five to ten years, close to half of the existing faculty members within BC post-secondary institutions will have reached retirement age. Filling those vacancies will, increasingly, become a major focus for BC's post-secondary employers.

Unfortunately, the restrictions placed on public sector bargaining in BC over the last eight years will seriously impede that recruitment effort. Salary scales in other jurisdictions, especially Alberta and Ontario, have moved well past BC's top-of-scale salary level. More importantly, the pattern of settlements in these competing jurisdictions include percentage increases in future years that will likely widen the salary gap that has developed between BC and other provinces.

Three initiatives need to be mobilized in order to close that gap. Obviously, free collective bargaining in BC's post-secondary education sector must not only be encouraged, it needs to be strengthened. Second, post-secondary employers need to understand the important contribution that negotiated benefits play in strengthening their capacity to recruit new faculty. Contractual benefits like the College Pension Plan, our comprehensive coverage for Extended Health Benefits and our relatively compressed salary scale—which allows new faculty to reach top-of-scale sooner—all contribute to making recruitment more effective. And finally, post-secondary employers need to recognize that employment security provisions in existing contracts can also help strengthen recruitment efforts. When prospective faculty have better access to stronger employment security protections (e.g. regularization or tenure), the recruitment effort is made that much more effective.

Conclusion

FPSE believes there is an urgent need for significant revisions to the policies and funding choices made over the last decade. Post-secondary education must play a critical role in building the future of BC, but that role has been undermined by changes made to the public system over the last decade, changes that have impaired both access and affordability. Public policy changes are needed and there is an opportunity to broaden the public debate that should precede a government commitment to implement those changes. Post-secondary educators want to play a critical role in designing those changes and participating in that larger public debate. To that end, we are encouraging the public to consider the following recommendations as part of dedicated plan for change in our post-secondary education system:

1. Improve funding, affordability and access by:
 - Setting a four-year budget target that leads to increases in real per-student operating grants to post-secondary institutions.
2. Strengthen BC's commitment to developmental education by:
 - Creating policy and funding options that support adult learners returning to post-secondary education.
3. Expand opportunities for English Language Training as well as increased international student support services at public institutions by:
 - Ensuring that new ELT programs, services and funding target public post-secondary institutions.
 - Providing additional funding mechanisms to ensure that our public post-secondary institutions have the capacity to provide additional student support services to the anticipated increase in international students that the Premier has cited in her provincial jobs strategy.
4. Change BC's system of trades training and apprenticeships by:
 - Reforming the Industry Training Authority (ITA) to ensure that all stakeholders, not just employers, are given an equal voice in the running of BC's trades training system. As well, re-align ITA's reporting mandate back to the Ministry of Advanced Education.

5. Advance the role of Liberal Studies and University Transfer programs by:
 - Strengthening the support and funding of Liberal Arts and University Transfer programs at colleges and special purpose and research universities in BC.
6. Effectively regulate BC's private post-secondary institutions by:
 - Introducing requirements that all private post-secondary colleges, institutes and language schools register with a reformed PCITA and that the new regulator is governed by a Board that includes equal representation for teaching faculty on its Board.
7. Establish better policies for recruitment & retention by:
 - Guaranteeing free collective bargaining throughout BC's public sector.
 - Re-balancing BC's labour laws to support greater unionization.
 - Establishing a more sustainable system of faculty supports to ensure that BC achieves the highest possible learning environments in every post-secondary institution.
8. Make BC post-secondary institutions leaders in technology, research and scholarly activity by:
 - Ensuring all post-secondary institutions have equal access to research funding and supports.
 - Improving the capital funding allocated to post-secondary institutions.
 - Providing greater support for faculty professional development.
9. Democratize and strengthen post-secondary governance by:
 - Amending the offending sections of Bill 18, the *Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act*, that bar faculty elected representatives from also serving on their local association executive.
 - Amending both the *University Act* and the *Colleges and Institutes Act* to prevent administrators from creating an imbalance in the faculty and administrative representation on Senates and Education Councils.
 - Ensuring that faculty representatives have an equal voice within every institution's governance structures as well as the province's degree granting process.